BRECHT
and
MODERN ENGLISH DRAMATISTS

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PREFACE

This book concerns the impact of Brecht's theory and practice of alienation on the modern English dramatists : W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, John Osborne, John Arden. This is done, first, by defining the nature of impact on the respective English dramatists through the examination of specific plays in comparison with some Brechtian plays. The object of the examination is to find out how far the English dramatists were successful in assimilating the essence of Brecht's theatre which represents itself in his pivotal idea of alienation(1) as content and form. This will, in turn, reveal whether the impact of Brecht's theatre on the English dramatists resulted in the emergence of a trend or a certain school within the English threatre through the emulation and development of Brechtian themes and techniques. Consequently, this will clarify the similarities and contrasts between the respective English dramatists, on the one hand, and those between Brecht and his English counterparts, on the other. The conclusions resulting from the analysis and comparison between the Breshtian theatre and the English theatre, will help in placing Brecht's epic theatre within the English theatrical tradition, and probably point to the possible path of Brecht's theatre by relating the repurcussions of Brecht's impact on the leading dramatists to present day English drama.

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1. See **Alienation and Brecht's Theatre** by Mona Abousenna (Cairo : Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop).

CHAPTER I

THE IMPACT OF BRECHT'S CONCEPT AND TECHNIQUE OF ALIENATION ON THE PLAYS OF W.H. AUDEN AND CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

The object of this chapter is to trace Brecht's impact on plays written by W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood as being representatives of an English version of Brechtian drama. However, before proceeding to the discussion of the plays, it would be pertinent to define first what we mean by impact. Impact has to do with the influence one person exercises upon another. In the case of artistic or literary influence, the artist or author must be familiar with, assimilate and possibly develop the work of another writer with whom he shares certain interests. Such development is the result of the creative assimilation of the author's pivotal idea which is translated into a specific dramatic and theatrical form.

Influence, in this sense, has two opposite manifestations: positive and negative. The negative aspect of influence is presented by mere imitation, under which borrowing and plagiarism may be classified. The positive aspect, however, has only one manifestation, namely, creativity which is measured by the extent to which the arist influences, develops and enriches the work of the artist who is the object of the influence.

It is assumed that any creative assimilation of the works of a great author by another, whether he lives in the same age or comes from a different age, must stem from a conscious recognition of the real merit of the writer concerned. Such merit lies in the core of the author's work, which is inherent in the pivotal idea. Since alienation is pivotal in Brecht's theatre, and is inherent in the content and form of his drama, investigation of Brecht's impact in the respective works of Auden and Isherwood from this particular angle will be made. This will enable us to determine the nature and extent of the impact. In other words, in placing these writers within the Brechtian tradition, we should consider their contribution in the light of the dialectical movement in spiral(2) and the concept of alienation in relation to Brecht's theatre.

To clarify the nature and extent of the impact, it is necessary to distinguish two different categories in Brecht's drama which we will define as : the essential and the inessential features. The essential feature of Brecht's theatre is alienation as content (socio-philosophical concept), and technique (alienation effects). In this sense, alienation is the criterion of the content which, in turn, determines the technique. Consequently, alienation effects acquire a specific function and become a social measure and a dramatic means to remove alienation. This is the reference frame of the essential feature of Brecht's technique. The ines-

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2. Mona Abousenna, **op. cit.,** pp. 47-52.

sential features, on the other hand, are related to the technique (alienation) in isolation from the concept of alienation as interpreted by Brecht, for the alienation effects as a social and critical measure are inextricably tied up with man's alienation in its social, economic, political, intellectual contexts.

Brecht explains the content of his theory in his essay "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" :

> The production took the subject-matter and the incidents and put them through a process of alienation: the alienation that is necessary to all understanding. When something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up. What is 'natural' must simultaneously be so and be capable of being different.(3)

The technical implications of the theory are explained by Brecht in another essay entitled "The Street Scene," where he clarifies the nature and social function of his technique :

> ...one of those elements that are preculiar to the epic theatre, the so-called A-effect (alienation effect). What is involved here is, briefly, a technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling

3. Brecht, trans. J. Willet, **op. cit.,** p. 71.

> them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, is not to be taken for granted, not just natural. The object of this "effect' is to allow the spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view.(4)

Brecht's statement that alienation leads to understanding implies two issues : rationality and dialectics. A-effects are a medium that enables the audience to rationalize their state of alienation. The dialectical relation between the audience and reality is established through the A-effects as an element of mediation between the present alienated reality (as expressed in the content and incidents of the play), and future de-alienated reality (to be realized by the spectator outside the theatre). Having understood the causes and effects of his alienation, the spectator's surprise is aroused as to the strangeness and irrationality of the state of alienation. He sees it now as an illogical process within a frame relating cause and effect. The nature of this wonder and curiosity (Staunen und Neugierde), and its effect on the spectator are qualitatively different from any method employed by traditional writers, in the sense expressed by Shelley's statement: "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar."(5) Brecht's

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4. Brecht, (trans.) John Willet, **op. cit.,** p. 125.
5. P.B. Shelley, ed. John Shawcross, **Literary and Philosophical Criticism** (London : 1909), p. 112.

development of the concept reveals a reciprocal metamorphosis of the romantic idea of alienation. He is not concerned with the phenomena of the wonderful, exotic, strange, and his intention is not just to make things strange or unfamiliar, be it the beauty or ugliness of reality, but to remove any phenomenon that is unacceptable by reason and logical thinking. Therefore, the effect of making things strange implied in Brecht's technique, is revolutionary because it relies on rational understanding and implying praxis. This is due to his firm conviction that reason and praxis are the cause and motivation of any revolutionary change, i.e. as a transcendence of the strange, alienated reality within which man can be at home in the world.

The first condition for the realization of this revolutionary rational awareness, as Brecht saw it, is a technique that breaks up the unity between the spectator and reality by detaching him from it. This breaking up of unity is the underlying principle of Brecht's technique which he calls the "separation of elements":

> So long as the expression 'Gesamtkunstwerk' (or 'integrated work of art') means that the integration is a muddle, so long as the arts are supposed to be 'fused' together, the various elements will all be equally degraded, and each will act as a mere 'feed' to the rest. The process of fusion extends to the spectator, who gets thrown into the melting pot too and becomes a passive (suffering) part of the total

> work of art. Witchcaft of this sort must of course be fought against. Whatever is intended to produce hypnosis, is likely to induce sordid intoxication, or create fog, has got to be given up. **Words, music and setting must become independent of one another.**(6)

This seperation essentially applies to the relation between audience and theatre, with the aim of presenting the idea of alienation. The change which Brecht introduced to the old technique is to serve that purpose. Hence, we should distinguish between the technique and the separation of the spectator. In other words, one should not concentrate on the elements of the technique because these are the raw material, but rather examine the manner in which this raw material is used to present and clarify a certain concept or argument. This is to say, the method is used to present this material for a specific social purpose. In the Aristotelian theatre, this material has ben used within the limits of achieving a unity between content and form by unifying the elements to realize identification and catharsis. Whereas the effect of the technique in the Aristotelian theatre is a psychological one in the sense of the release of emotions, that of Brecht's theatre is revolutionary rationalism in the sense that it brings about a liberation from alienation, realized through disrupting the unity between the spectator and the theatre by means of

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6. Brecht, trans. J. Willet, **op. cit.,** p. 135.

separating the elements of the technique. The change in style is not the essence of Brecht's theatre, but rather the relation between the audience and the theatre. Brecht's commitment to present the idea of alienation necessitates a relation of detachment instead of the Aristotelian relation of identification. Whereas the essential feature of the Aristotelian drama is the internalization of reality and the concentration on the relation between man and himself instead of man and the objective reality and the possibility of changing it, the essential feature of Brecht's drama is the exposition of objective reality as being historically conditioned and of man's ability to change it. It is this essential feature of Brecht's theatre which determines the use and the effect of his technique of alienation. In this sense Brecht enables "the unfree, ignorant man of our century, with his thirst for freedom and his hunger for knowledge;... the tortured and heroic, abused and ingenious, changeable and world-changing man of this great and ghastly century (to) obtain his own theatre which will help him to master the world and himself."(7)

To understand the essential feature of Brecht's theatre is to understand the dialectical relation between the content and form of his drama and to see the problem of alienation as the criterion which guides this relation, that is, the use of the form

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7. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **op. cit.**, p. 135.

for a special content. In this sense, the function of the form is to change the content, that is, the A-effects act as a mediator between a content of alienation and one of de-alienation. Hence, it is not possible to use the old A-effects which incorporate an old content to convey a new one. The elements of technique : music, setting decor, costumes, songs, which are the concrete A-effects, are used by Brecht to convey to the audience the idea of alienation and to carry if from the state of alienation, which is implied in the content of the old A-effects, to a state of de-alienation implied in the new ones. Hence ,the essential function of Brecht's A-effects is to realize this transition from an alienated to a de-alienated content. In this sense, the form is the outproduct of the content, and it also affects the content as much as it is affected by it. Brecht's new content is the antithesis of the old content of the Aristotelian theatre, which eliminates the positive role of the audience. Brecht discovered the positive role of the audience which lies in the surpassing of the status quo. Yet, the positivenes of Brecht's theatre has its origins in the passivity of Aristotle's theatre, that is, it is the negation of the negative element (the passivity) of Aristotle's theatre, or in the language of dialectics, the negation of negation. This dialectical relation between Aristotle's and Brecht's theatre resulted in the change of form.

Talking about the Brechtian tradition and its impact on Auden and Isherwood's plays, we should first decide which Brecht influenced those writers, i.e. which phase of his theatre.

In order to clarify that aspect, it is important to go back to a definite period of time. There are two phases within which we could determine and trace the influence of Brecht's theatre on other dramatists : the period during his life and production, i.e. from 1918 until his death in 1956, and after his death. As far as the plays of Auden and Isherwood are concerned, the frame of reference will be the alive Brecht of the 1930s. Hence, the period of the thirties will be our frame of reference when we talk about Brecht's impact on Auden and Isherwood's plays. This will establish a dialectical relation between the perspective authors and Brecht, and will help us trace the extent and nature of the influence. As there is almost no definite evidence that Auden and Brecht actually met in that period,(8) the period itself will be our unifying element. By comparing the reaction of both authors to the same priod as reflected in their works of the time, we shall be able to come out with results concerning the influence.

The period of the thirties produced a sudden release of

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8. It was not until 1946 that Auden collaborated with Brecht and H.H. Hays in adapting **The Duchess of Malfi,** and at Brecht's request he translated the songs in **The Caucasian Chalk Circle.** With Chester Kallman, Auden translated Brecht's ballet cantata, **The Seven Deadly Sins,** and finally **Mahagonny.** John Willett also quotes Auden as saying that he was certainly influenced by **The Threepenny Opera** (1928) and **Mahagonny** (1929). **The Theatre of Bertold Brecht** (London : Eyre Methuen, 1977), p. 218.

.hought and action which was strongly felt among the British intellectuals who proclaimed themselves left-wing. These groups of intellectuals to which Auden and Isherwood belonged, engaged in various political activities which arose out of their interest in contemporary issues such as communism, fascism, and the Spanish Civil War. Being mostly concentrated in the circles of London, Oxford and Cambridge Universities' students and graduates, the left-wing groups of the thirties belonged almost all to the wealthy, middle class. These rebellious intellectuals, according to Nael Wood :

> ...concentrated almost entirely in London, Oxford and Cambridge—where the children of the leisure classes were educated. The majority of the left-wing activities were to be found among the students of the arts and certain of the sciences, particularly biology and physics. Very few studying for the professions of law, medicine and engineering seemed to be inclined in this direction.(9)

Hence, rather than being socially or politically persecuted for their beliefs and activities, these groups attracted considerable attention(10). Furthermore, Buel gives two reasons for the

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9. Nael Wood, **Communism and the British Intellectuals** (New York : Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 53.
10. Frederick Buel, **W.H. Auden as a Social Poet** (London : Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 105.

tolerance and even reverence to the left-wing tendencies in the thirties: the first is the fact that the government of the day was stable and could absorb protest without having to resort to political persecution; second, the nature of the capitalist crisis which manifested itself in the rise of fascism and which seemed to be the most essential threat to democracy.(11) However, their movement as Buel observes further: "...was neither simply one of moral outrage nor one of desperate, alienated young men reacting against the wasteland of early twentieth-century society, a society which had lost its belief of itself."(12)

Instead of suffering from self-alienation, whether on the personal or on the social level, the young rebellious intellectuals rather identified themselves with the English tradition. They never transcended their social class nor dealt with any local issues in terms of the class struggle and revolutionary change. Stephen Spender, one of Auden's group at the time, commented critically on the class position of Auden at the time:

> From the point of view of the working-class movement the ultimate criticism of Auden and the poets associated with him is that we haven't deliberately and consciously transferred ourselves to the working class.

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11. Frederick Buel, **op. cit.,** pp. 114-115.
12. **Ibid.,** p. 105.

> The subject of his poetry is the struggle, but the struggle seen, as it were, by someone who whilst living on one camp, sympathizes with the other; a struggle in fact while existing externally is also taking place within the mind of the poet himself.(13)

The activities of this group of intellectuals were almost always stimulated by and directed towards outside issues and movements such as the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Civil War. Their protest against the British establishment had a very personal nature. Buel explains it :

> ...its (1930s) vital center is located in problems of a deeper and often personal nature, problems that were interrelated with the political conflict. The most important of these were the revolt of the young against a society controlled by their parents or people like their parents and, in conjunction with this revolt, the attempt to find a new form of self-expression and self-realization in the face of "established" reality.(14)

Such infantile tendencies of revolt are absolutely incapable of seeing beyond their surrounding whether personal or social.

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13. S. Spender, "Oxford to Communism", New Verse, October 1937.
14. Frederick Buel, **op. cit.,** p. 108.

Lacking a comprehensive world outlook and a method to guide what was seen as a stagnanl government and political structure."(15) Such inclination towards chaotic, possibly irrational action, leads to anarchy and free, personal indulgence in all forms of irresponsible protest. As a matter of fact, irresponsible anarchism was one of the traits of the thirties in Europe in general :

> ...the thirties represented an explosive release of the new in many areas of English culture and thought, for the extreme energy of such a release would contain of necessity elements of exuberant chaos. We see arising a new poetry, a new visual art, a new social theory, a new method of sociological research, and a new social grouping of intellectuals.(16)

This aspect of free indulgence in cultural and artistic activties was what attracted the young Auden to Weimar Germany of the late twenties, to which he went after his graduation from Oxford from 1927-28, as his parents offered to finance a year abroad. Auden's trip to Germany came at a crucial turning point in his life, as he was virtually emerging from political ignorance and naivety, to less frivolous and detached interest

15. Frederick Buel, **op. cit.,** p. 109.
16. **Ibid.,** p. 111.

in politics. This was enhanced and consolidated, strangely enough, by the German social conditions rather than by the English ones. Writing in retrospect, Auden recalls the German experience :

> The first personal choice I can remember making was my decision, when my father offered me a year abroad after I had gone down from Oxford, to spend it in Berlin. I knew no German literature but I felt out of sympathy with French culture, partly by temperament and partly in revolt against the generation of intellectuals immediately preceding mine, which was strongly Francophile. It is a decision (for which) I have been thankful ever since.(17)

Weimar Germany had a direct appeal to Auden, for "it was after his experience abroad that the political theme entered his work."(18) The Berlin cultural milieu, the political cabaret of Wedekind and Piscator's political plays and Brecht's early experiments in epic theatre, all attracted the attention of the young Auden. However, Breon Mitchell disproves the prevailing view that Auden was strongly influenced by Brecht's epic theatre :

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17. W.H. Auden, "As It Seemed to Us, "**The New Yorker,** 41 (April 3, 1965), p. 182.
18. Frederick Buel, **op. cit.,** p. 80.

> As for Brecht, Auden was certainly influenced to some degree by the **Dreigroschenoper** and **Mahagonny,** the first of which he saw while in Berlin (1928), but, we must remember, at a time when he was only beginning to learn German. He was also familiar with some of the songs from **Mahagonny** which had been printed at this time in the **Hauspostille** collection. The play itself was not produced in Berlin until 21 December 1931. Auden feels the influence upon his plays to have been slight at least, and certainly not of major importance. This is not to deny a more profound influence on his poetry. He had read ond enjoyed Brecht's **Hauspostille** poems (1927), as mentioned above, but feels this did not influence his plays. He still prefers Brecht's lyric poetry to the dramatic works. Thus he says that an attempt to pin down a major influence to Brecht in the 1930s would be 'very wrong.'(19)

Buel endorses this view by adding that "the attempts to trace a specific and definite influence to Brecht is one that makes too much out of a relatively limited literary contact."(20) Mitchell's

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19. Breon Mitchell, "W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood: 'The German Influence," **German Life and Letters,** 1965, p. 165.
20. F. Buel, **op. cit.,** p. 81.

argument is strongly supported by the discovery of other more relevant sources for Auden's plays, namely, Ibsen, Cocteau and the English Christmas pantomime. He maintains further that the German influence in Auden's plays is rather that of the film and the cabaret than the theatre, as those were the genres that attracted Auden in Germany most. He writes :

> Although there seems to have been little direct influence from German drama as a result of the Berlin years there were important non-dramatic influences. These were specifically the cabaret and the cinema—and in a wider sense the general mood of excitement and unrest prevalent at the time.(21)

In order to prove the validity of Mitchell's own interpretation of Auden's response to Brecht's influence in particular and to the spirit of the age in general, we should consider, when we talk about the "general mood" or the spirit of the thirties, to what extent Brecht understood and represented the spirit of the time in order to find out how far Auden was influenced by Brecht within the frame of the time and not outside it. The fact that Brecht's influence on Auden was slight as he himself proclaimed, might point to two possibilities : either it means

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21. B. Mitchell, **op. cit.,** p. 166.

that Brecht was not completely successful in expressing the spirit of the time, or it could mean that Auden could not entirely assimilate the spirit of the thirties in its full sense and in the same intensity as Brecht did. To answer this crucial question, it is essential to register that Brecht's perception of the violent period of the thirties, that started with Hitler's rise to power, stemmed from his strong consciousness of the various forms of alienation imminent in the capitalist mode of production and the institution of private property. Hence, his insistence in his works to reveal and expose the causes that bring about the state of alienation by stressing the class struggle and the necessity of revolutionary change as an essential step towards the elimination of alienation and the establishment of a just, humane and de-alienated society. This means that Brecht perceived and assimilated the spirit of the age in terms of the problem of alienation in the various aspects : economic, psychological, sociological and political. Proceeding from an idealist to a pseudo-materialist and finally to a real dialectical materialist interpretation of alienation, Brecht could vigourously develop and enrich his interpretation of the problem as well as his solution to it. He could achieve his object through revealing in his Lehrstücke, through which he developed his theory of epic theatre, the contradictions inherent within the capitalist system and its mode of production which produces alienation. In this sense, the didactic Lehrstücke of the late twenties and early thirties, were intended as a medium or a means of educating

the working class politically and socially by making them actually participate in the performance.

Auden, on the other hand, was unable to grasp the spirit of the time in its full entirety due to the nature of his rebellion which was idealistically oriented. His idealistic approach to the problems of the time made him concentrate on certain aspects of capitalism, thus attacking the by-products only of the system instead of the system itself and the causes inherent in the system that produce the problems. Such fragmentary outlook needed a method to help him find the way to change. However, Auden's attraction to Marxism was rather shallow because it was "inspired chiefly by his urgent search for spiritual order and moral responsibility."(22) Marxism, which became a widespread ideology in the thirties all over Europe, had only a slight and transient influence on Auden and his group. The géneral attitude of the British intellectuals towards Marxism during the thirties, which indirectly applies to Auden, is summed up by Perry Anderson:

> Marxism, in fact, was virtually unknown until the thirties of this century. It then suddenly gripped a new generation of intellectuals, overwhelmed by the depression and the rise of Fascism. It is difficult in retrospect to make any fair judgement of the thirties.

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22. Richard Hoggart, **W.H. Auden** (London: Longman, 1977), p. 17.

> No decade has been so obscured by myth and cliché for later generations. ...What is clear is that a spontaneous radicalization of the traditionally dormant English intelligentsia occured, spurred by the political gravity of the time. It was cut short after a few years, by the German-Soviet Pact and the Second World War. The vast majority of those intellectuals who had briefly been on the Left swung to the Right, and the traditional order of English intellectual life was restored.(23)

Marxism was incidental to Auden's literary career and way of thinking, whereas for Brecht it moulded his way of thinking and all his dramatic and theatrical production. Auden failed to integrate and assimilate the Marxist philosophy and the dialectical method into his artistic vision because it was always extrinsic to his mentality and outlook. His short-lived infatuation with Marxism was almost unwillingly imposed upon him by the strong events of the time. His almost unconscious indulgence in political activities at the time, came to an end with the end of the economic depression. This is proved by Auden's own account of his activities during the General Strike in 1926 :

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23. Perry Anderson, "Components of the National Culture", **Student Power,** ed. Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn (London : Penguin, 1969), pp. 223-224.

> It happened that a first cousin of mine, married to a stockbroker, lived a few doors away, so I paid a call. The three of us were just sitting down to lunch when her husband asked me if I had come up to London to be a Social Constable. "No," I said, "I am driving a car for the T.U.C." whereupon, to my utter astonishment, he ordered me to leave the house. It had never occured to me that anybody took the General Strike seriously.(24)

This means that the objective conditions were so strong to the extent of weakening the subjective factor on Auden's part. Unlike Brecht, Auden's awarenes of the deterioration of the objective factors was not so strong. That is, Brecht felt in the deterioration of the conditions in Germany at the time, the inability of the objective factor to satisfy the needs of the human being. Therefore, he transcended these deteriorating factors and looked for other factors that would satisfy the human needs elsewhere i.e. outside the prevailing conditions. Whereas the subjective factor in Auden's case was weak because he stopped at the point of idealistic rebellion, sought partial changes within the existing system and indulged in an idealist interpretation of the problems of the age.

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24. W.H. Auden, "As It Seemed to Us," **op. cit.,** p. 182.

Auden's reaction and approach to the social and political problems of the thirties are reflected in his dramatic treatment in the three plays he wrote in collaboration with Isherwood. To reveal this treatment we will turn to the first play : **The Dog Beneath the Skin**, produced in 1935. As the title of this play may suggest disguise is an essential factor in Auden's treatment of the theme and of the epic technique, as he was acquainted with it through **The Threepenny Opera** and **Mahagonny.** The symbolic significance of disguise is related to the subjective factor i.e. Auden's inability to face the capitalist system in a human shape or style. Francis, the protagonist, fights against the system, but in order to camouflage his weakness he disguises in the shape of a dog. The disguise gives him enough justification for his weakness to confront the system. Auden's conviction of the fact that social change is a hopeless case and his inability to face the conditions, are due to his insufficient knowledge of the concrete causes of the injustice of the system. He sees it as a strong, superhuman, evil power that dominates man's life and against which he is unable to act. To prove his inability to fight this evil power, he wants to tell the audience that change is not possible because we are animals and do not possess the power to change reality because the animals' relation to reality is horizontal and not vertical. Therefore, Francis gives up any revolutionary activity and is satisfied with protest. This negative attitude of protest does not reach to the level of positive, radical change. Therefore, he is alienated from his

potentially human ability to change reality, i.e. he has alienated his humanity to a dog. This alienation takes the form of partial renunciation which is manifested by his rejection of the conditions, and his disguise enables him presumably to partially retain his humanity. So, on the one hand, he is a dog and, on the other, a man. Even when he finally decides to take action by shifting his allegiance, we are not quite sure of the side he moves to : "I am going to be a unit in the army of the other side : but the battlefield is so huge that it's practically certain you will never see me again."(25) Furthermore, Francis's words reveal an absolute denial of the existence of class struggle.

In Francis's final revelation of his real identity and his long address to the people of the town, he tells them : "I've had a dog'seye-view of you for the last ten years."(26) This is the level of the vision that Auden offers in the play; we can only confront the evils of capitalism at the level of the animal. By reducing man to an animal, Auden asserts man's inability to change reality.

The places visited by Alan and the disguised Francis are examples of some facets of capitalist society. They demonstrate

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25. W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, **The Dog Beneath the Skin** (London : Faber and Faber, 1935), p. 118.
26. **Ibid.,** p. 115.

its evil impact on human beings. The scenes in the Red Light District (Act I, scene V), demonstrates in a light comic style the exploitation exercised in the world of prostitution; the injustice of the royal monarchy displayed at the palace in Ostnia Act I, scene IV); fascism, as an extreme example of capitalism, subjugating people's minds and turning them into ferocious luna tics (Act I, scene I); the destruction of cultural values displayed by the destructive Desmond in the Nineveh Hotel (Act II, scene II). These places only show thę by-products of capitalism, and the people who suffer from these by-products are faced with a dog's-eye-view, which is a kind of humiliation for them and for their suffering.

The element of disguise points to the special nature of Auden's satire, or the social function of satire in Auden's play. This function derives from the author's social position. Satire in Brecht's theätre, for instance, has a specific social function, namely, to evoke and intensify the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat by exposing to him the concrete causes of his misery. The object of such satire is to bring about a radical, revolutionary change of the social structure. The difference between the nature and object of Auden's satire and those of Brecht's lies in the quality of Auden's satire which is accurately pointed out by C. Day Lewis :

...in guying his (Auden's) victims too often becomes

> identified with them, so that, instead of the relationship between satirist and victim which alone can give significance to satire we get a series of figures of fun into each of whom the satirist temporarily disappears.(27)

The reason for that technical flaw lies in Auden's social and ideological stance, i.e. which side he is on in the class struggle. B. Everett comments on this particular point :

> The problem is not peculiar to Auden, but inherent in the task he is taking on. Venturing into the area of simplified practical propaganda, Auden is faced—like others who did the same—by a question even more radical than "Which side am I supposed to be on ?" The question is "What are the sides supposed to be ?" and the answer must either take the writer into a world he is simply not acquainted with... or will leave him to re-iterate romantic generalities.

As Auden could not answer the question pertaining to the nature of the sides in terms of class divisions, his vision of

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27. C. Day Lewis, **A Hope for Poetry** (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 46.
28. Barbara Everett, **Auden** (London : Oliver and Boyd, 1964), p. 51.

class structure was generalized as expressed in Francis's ultimate defeat : "We are all of us unimportant, so it would be very silly to start quarelling, wouldn't it ? Goodbye."(29)

The end in view of Brecht's satire is not just to make fun of the characters. His intention is rather to criticize the capitalist system through these characters by revealing the contradictions between two opposing world views. However, Auden does not conceive of satire in this way. Reviewing **The Dog Beneath the Skin,** Parsons comments on Auden's use of satire in the play :

> For all the dreary jokes imaginable it must surely be the dreariest, the flattest, and the stalest that has managed to get into print for some time. Dreary, because it is set out with a great deal of extravagant pretension; flat, because the satire is so crude that it completely misses fire; and stale because the objects against which it is directed have been objects of ridicule for the last ten year or more... satire depends upon the recognition of incongruities, through the simultaneous presentation of turth and absurdity. Without a basis of truth there is not scale of actuality against

29. W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, **op. cit.,** p. 121.

which to measure the pretensions which are the objects of satire.(30)

The incongruity in **The Dog Beneath the Skin** lies between what it expected and what actually happens, or between the two modes of Francis's behaviour, that of a dog and that of a human being in disguise. The laughter evoked by such incongruity is not satirical because it lacks the element of recognition due to the audience's ignorance of Francis's double identity throughout the play. Hence, their laughter is alienated because it does not transcend it to genuine satire. Consequently, it would be safe to say this kind of satire is disguised farce. Therefore, Scarfe observes :

> It is sufficient to remark that such a device as disguising Francis as a dog in **The Dog Beneath the Skin** would, according to Bergson, preclude any possibility of such a play rising above the level of farce. It is this fact which allowed the bankers, capitalists and aristocrats to go and see the play and have a good laugh, without in any way being moved or amaxed by the axe that was being ground.(31)

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30. I.M. Parsons, "The Dog. Beneath the Skin," **Spectator** (June 28, 1935), p. 1112.
31. F. Scarfe, **Auden and After** (London : Methuen, 1942), p. 42.

Spears detects another form of disguise in the theme of "love as escape or as disguised self-love."(32) This is brought out in Alan's affair with the shopwindow dummy. Spears remarks that this is explicit representation of narcissism "which is a picture of Man 'divided always and restless always : afraid and unable to forgive' ..."(33) This theme of love as disguised self-love is another manifestation of another by-product of capitalism, namely, the divided self. However, Auden does not attempt to relate that aspect of capitalism to a larger and wider theme that reveals the causes of these by-products.

Another disguise is seen in the technique which may be described as disguised epic or pseudo-Brechtian. However, before discussing the feature of the technique, we should refer to the fact that Brecht gave credit to the artistic qualities of Auden and Isherwood's experiments with the "revue" form, which Brecht considered an attempt to literarize the traditional folk tale. Brecht's appreciation of these attempts is expressed in his "Notes on the Folk Play :"

> Revue is to the folk play as a song-hit to a folksong, though the folk play lacked the folksong's

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32. Monroe K. Spears, **The Poetry of W.H. Auden** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 91.
33. **Ibid.**

> nobility. More recently the revue has been taken up as a literary form. Wegenheim of Germany, Abell of Denmark, Blitzstein of the USA and Auden of England have written interesting plays in the form of revues, plays that are neither crude nor humble. Their plays have something of the poetry of the old folk play but absolutely nothing of its naivety. They avoid its conventional situations and schematic characters, though on closer inspection they are even more romantic. Their situations are grotesque and at bottom they hardly have characterers, barely even parts for the actors. The linear story has been thrown on the scrap heap, the story itself as well as its line, for the new plays have no story, hardly even a connecting thread.(34)

In the particular plays of Auden and Isherwood, Brecht concentrates upon the poetry which he thinks, can offer possibilities for the creation of a new folk play :

> The literary revue also gives pointers where poetry is concerned. In particular those plays which Auden wrote with Isherwood contain sections of great poetic beauty. He uses choruses and very fine poems, and

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34. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **op. cit.,** p. 153.

the events themselves are also sometimes elevated. It is all more or less symbolic, however; he even re-introduces allegory. If one compares him with Aristophanes—which Auden wouldn't mind—one sees the markedly subjective character of this poetry and symbolism; so that the new folk play ought to learn from the poetry but provide greater objectivity. The poetry ought perhaps to be more in the actual situations instead of being expressed by the characters reacting on them.(35)

Although Brecht considers the introduction of the "numbers" in the revue—as an alternative to the old plot of the traditional folk tale—as a good innovation, he sees that "the sketches are not bound by narration ,and they have few epic elements."(36) Yet, according to Brecht, the achievements of the literary revue should be preserved with the intention of creating a new kind of folk play that contains more epic substance and is more realistic than the literary revue. Writing about experimentation and innovation in art, Brecht makes some hints to the new kind of folk play :

The new school of play-writing must systematically

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35. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **op. cit.**, p. 154.

see to it that its form include 'experiment.' It must be free to use connections on every side; it needs equilibrium and has a tension which governs its component parts and 'loads' them against one another. (Thus this form is anything but a revue-like sequence of sketches).(37)

Auden's use of comic sketches as an alienation efect in **The Dog Beneath the Skin,** particularly the sequence in the Red Light district and the "eating a girl" episode, is, according to K. Worth, identified by Isherwood as a borrowing from **Mahagonny**.(38) Hence, Auden's application of Bechtian technical devices is more repetition and imitation of a devices that lacks creativity because it misses the essence of the technique's content. Whereas the scenes in Brecht's plays do not simply coexist, that is, are not simply juxtaposed to one another, but rather achieve a qualitative change through the dialectical contradiction between scenes, Auden's episodes and scenes are a series of unrelated sketches placed side by side and lack a dialectical unity. In this sense, the technique of the sketches is closer to the music-hall than to Brecht's epic style. Writing about Auden's poetry, Everett says: "...it is the variety and fertility of his work, rather than

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36. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **op. cit.,** p. 154.
37. **Ibid.**
38. Katherine J. Worth, **Revolutions in Modern English Drama** (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1973), p. 108.

its unity, which first commands attention."(39) If we apply this statement to Auden's plays, we will see that the reason for this variety without unity lies in the lack of a pivotal idea. Whereas in Brecht's plays this unity is achieved through the pivotal idea of alienation, in Auden's works we get only a variety of themes without a unity of a pivotal concept to relate and unify them.

In "The Short Organum For the Theatre," Brecht lays down the theoretical foundations for a most revolutionary attempt in the theatre. Attempting to remedy the defects that are usually caused by the separation of entertainment and instruction, Brecht brings two apparently different worlds together. This attempt is revolutionary because it eliminates the dualism and demarcation between the entertainment which pertains to the body, and the instruction which pertains to the mind, and which is a manifestation of alienation. By bringing to close proximity these two worlds, a kind of inversion of values happens. In this way, the function of the theatre would be mainly to convey the new values that have arisen as a result of uniting body and mind, emotion and reason, entertainment and instructnon. Auden, on the other hand, maintains the division between body and mind by emphasizing the world of grace as a means of spiritual salvation and a remedy for all human problems. In the Epilogue, the Semie Chorus II announces:

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39. B. Everett, **op. cit.,** p. 5.

Choose therefore that you may recover : both your
    charity and your place

Determining not this that we have lately witnessed :
    but another country

Where grave may grow outward and be given praise
Beauty and virtue be vivid there.(40)

This phantastic utopia is the ultimate vision of the rebel who has chosen to detach himself from the realistic world and join a sacred one instead, and who eventually deserts rebellion to a more conservative outlook on life. The idea of Christian love, charity and grace implied in Auden's play was later on developed and culminated in his complete renunciation of any sort of protest. Hence :

> The history of Auden's earlier mental journey is, roughly speaking, that of the gradual discovery of the potentialities of this word's (love) meaning for him— from an unresolved assertion to a rich and complex ambiguity which embraces the idea of Christian love, of conscience, of charity and grace. When the mo-

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40. W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, **op. cit.**, pp. 179-180.

> ment was reached Auden was an avowed Christian. The more directly political and psychological interests had fallen into place and the first phase was over.41)

The reason for this shift points clearly to a difference in the attitude of Brecht, on the one hand, and Auden and Isherwood on the other, towards the spirit of the age and the events of the time. The difference in attitude has its roots in the nature of the rebellion of both Auden and Isherwood as compared to the nature of Brecht's rebellion which he transcended to revolution. The answer to this question implies a subjective and an objective factor : the obejctive factor is represented in the events of the time as we have described above, whereas the subjective factor has to do with the nature of Auden's rebellion. Albert Camus, in one of his many descriptions of the rebel, states :

> The rebel is a man who is on the point of accepting or rejecting the sacrosanct and determined on creating a human situation where all the answers are human, or, rather formulated in terms of reason. From this moment every question, every word is an act of rebellion while in the sacrosanct world every word is an act of grace. It would be possible to

41. Richard Hoggart, **op. cit.**, p. 19.

> demonstrate in this manner that only two possible worlds can exist for the human mind, the sacrosanct (or to speak in Christian terms ,the world of Grace) or the rebel world. The disappearance of the one is equivalent to the appearance of the other.(42)

Talking about "metaphysical rebellion' 'as a specific type of rebellion, Camus goes on to say :

> ...the metaphysical rebel protests against the human condition in general... (he) declares that he is frustrated by the universe... The metaphysical rebel is... certainly not an atheist, as one might think him, but inevitabely he is a blasphemer... (he) defies more than he denies. Originally, at least, he does not deny God, he simply talks to Him as an equal. But it is not a polite dialogue. It is a polemic animated by the desire to conquer...(43)

These descriptions can be applied, almost word for word, to Auden's rebellion as manifested in his reaction towards the events of the thirties and in his later evolution until the end of his life. We can detect, from Camus's interpretation of the

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42. Albert Camus, **The Rebel,** trans. Anthony Bower, (London: Penguin, 1973), pp. 26-27.
43. **Ibid.**, pp. 30-31.

"metaphysical rebel," two features : first, the presence of the metaphysical factor represented by the belief in a transcendental world and a suprahistorical power as a strong element in the makeup of the metaphysical rebel; secondly, the negative tendency presented by the rebel's urge to defy (i.e. to protest) being stronger than the urge to deny (i.e. to transcend the existing conditions and find an alternative) which is the positive aspect of rebellion. The negative aspect of rebellion accepts the status quo, whereas the more positive rebel, who develops into a revolutionary, surpasses the status quo and finds the alternative in a new social order.

The last two plays will be dealt with more briefly, since they contain fewer and more limited Brechtian technical elements. **The Ascent of F6, a Tragedy in Two Acts,** was written and produced in 1936, and is dedicated to Auden's brother, a famous mountaineer. In this play, Auden moves closer towards psychological thinking which almost approaches to mystification. The world of the play is dominated by superstition, a demon and sexual repression. Driven by a mother fixation, Ransom undertakes the heroic ascent of the mountain F6, faces the demon who turns out to be his own mother, and dies a martyr after having accomplished a political victory for his country. Such mythical and irrational interpretation of a rational and realistic theme, namely, the struggle for political power, is an inversion of the Brechtian method of interpretation. Whereas Brecht's plays offer a rationalization of the irrational phenomena of society, Auden's play reverses the process by reverting to psy-

chological and metaphysical interpretations. The result is an odd mixture of sexo-religious interpretation of a political issue. The ascent of F6, which is basically a political and military issue, is given religious and psychological dimensions by the story of the demon who haunts the mountain and who is almost identified with Ransom's mother-fixation. MacNeice comments on the psychological aspect of the play :

> Auden being so interested in the phenomenon of the man of action..., many of his lyrics contain in condensed form what is worked out at length in the play, **F6** — the tragedy of the man who gets his own way. But Auden, while regarding so many of our neurosis as tragic, so many of our actions as self-deception, yet believes, ...that neurosis is the cause of an individual development.(44)

Auden's psychological approach is reflected in his attempt to criticize power and those who crave it. It shows a sense of renunciation of the material world with its evils for the sake of a pure, immaterial existence in the nowhere. It also shows further that politics and psychology for Auden "were only aspects of a more central interest, of (his) concern with the spiritual dilemma of individuals beyond the reach of political and

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44. Louis Maceice, **Modern Poetry** (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 173.

psychological reforms. This is, of course, a religious interest."(45) This muddled vision is the result of Auden's psycho-metaphysical interpretation of the problem of political power. Auden is disillusioned with a present world, feels hopeless towards the possibility of change and takes refuge in illusion. In other words, he substitutes the disillusion with an illusion.

If Auden and Isherwood's second play manifests a digression in the treatment of the theme, it certainly contains a positive element in terms of technique, which brings it close to one of the main aspects of Brecht's theatre, namely, audience participation. Auden's ideas about audience participation are contained in the programme to Auden's play **The Dance of Death** published 1933 :

> Drama began as the act of a whole community. Ideally there would be no spectators. In practice every member of the audience should feel like an understudy. Drama is essetially an art of the body. The basis of acting is acrobatics, dancing, and all forms of physical skill. The music hall, the Christmas pantomime, and the country house charade are the most living drama of today.(46)

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45. Richard Hoggart, **op. cit.,** p. 18.
46. Quoted by Ashley Dukes in "The English Scene," **Theatre Arts** 19, 1935.

Here are contained two major issues : the first, is the call for the audience's direct participation in the performance; the second registers a partial appeal on Auden's part to the sensual element of the alienation technique. Concerning the first issue, this call for the elimination of the dichotomy between stage and auditorium through the application of theatrical devices, is certainly the result of the Brechtian influence. The devices are typically Brechtian : the use of the Chorus to mediate between stage and audience, the planting of the actors in the audience, the bare stage, the actors pantomiming the scenery, the placing of the orchestra on the stage. Some of these devices are efficiently carried out in **The Ascent of F6** and, consequently, point to a direct impact of Brecht's alienation technique, though it is tinged with the traditional English forms of music hall, Christmas pantomime "where 'Brechtian' techniques were used in a very spontaneous, unselfconscious way."(47) The most outstanding device is the Chorus which is constituted of Mr. and Mrs. A., the Announcer, and whose function is to mediate between the audience and the central action i.e. Ransom's quest. Besides, the occasional use of verse acts as a means of beaking up the illusion and, hence, becomes an alienation effect in the Brechtian manner. From the point of view of the play's overall structure, being constructed around a main character, **The Ascent of F6** pertains more to the Aristotelian rather than to the Brechtian

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47. K. Worth, **op. cit.,** p. 109.

technique. Ransom's heroic ascent and his death make out of him a martyr, and his psychological motivations (Oedipus complex) make him a tragic hero in the traditional sense. Both, the idea of marytrdom and the tragic concept of fate, were strongly rejected by Brecht. Hence, **The Ascent of F6** is much closer than **The Dog Beneath, the Skin** to traditional dramatic form rather than to Brecht's epic style. Spears comments on the play's traditional structure :

> The central action of Ransom and his companions and their attempt to scale F6 resembles that of a conventional play, though the essential action is psychological and takes place inside Ransom,... One of the difficulties of the play is that, in spite of the author's best efforts, there does not seem to be much connection between Ransom's drama, which is psychological and religious, and the rest of the play, which has its caricature villains in the group of public figures led by James, and its victims in Mr. and Mrs. A., who seem excessively dreary. The theme of the corrupting effect of power provides what link there is. The play thus suffers from a radical incoherence, as well as a plethora of ideas and effects; to put it fliply, the Freud and the Marx in it don't jell.(48)

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48. M. Spears, **op. cit., pp. 101-102.**

In a likewise manner, the play's strutcure registers a seperation between the Brechtian technique of alienation and the traditional forms of alienation due to the absence of a pivotal idea and a method that could unite the subjective (psychological) and the objective (social reality) factors in one coherent structure.

The psychological approach is maintained in Auden's last play. **On the Frontier** produced in 1938. Here the idea of the frontier, as an abstract concept, is treated from a psychological angle. In the course of the play, scenes are divided into two halves each presenting simultaneously the two antagonistic countries : Ostnia and Westland. Scene 2 in Act 1 is described as follows : "The Ostnia-Westland Room. It is not supposed that the Frontier between the two countries does actually pass through this room : the scene is only intended to convey the **idea** of the Frontier "(49) The authors' intention behind building their play around the idea of the frontier, is to examine the idea in abstractum. What they have ultimately done is this melodrama which represents a muddled attitude towards the issue of war and country division. This attitude is expressed, in the play, by Dr. Thorvald :

> You see, I was brought up to think that a man's greatest prize was to fight for his country; and it's

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49. W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, **The Ascent of F6 and On the Frontier** (London : Faber and Faber, 1958).

hard to change one's ideas. Perhaps we were all wrong.

War seems so beastly when it actually happens. Perhaps "country" and "frontier' 'are old-fashioned words that don't mean anything now. What are we really fighting or ? I feel so muddled.(50)

It is actually the authors who do not know what attitude to take towards war because they are unable to pinpoint the concrete causes that lead to it. Hence, the only remedy they can suggest to end all wars, is again that magic word : love. If, according to Auden and Isherwood, the frontier stands for all kinds of barriers between people and countries and brings about wars, only love can wipe out this evil. The play, thus, ends with this call :

To build the city where
The will of love is done
And brought to its full flower
The dignity of man.(51)

Hence, the disasters of war and their elimination are reduced to

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50. W.H. Auden and Christophed Isherwood, **op. cit.,** pp. 166-167.
51. **Ibid.,** pp. 190-191.

the emotions of hate and love. The belief in such values as being the remedy for social problems is outright bourgeois idealism. Furthermore, it reveals the strong impact of Freud's idea about the conflict between the two basic human instincts, Death and Eros, which ultimately results in the victory of the forces of aggression and violence, or the instinct of Death, over that of Eros and the destruction of civilization. Whereas for Brecht, Freud represented an early stage of his evolution when he was still interested in the exploration of the problem of alienation from purely individual and psychological angles, Auden's reading of Freud had a lasting impact on his career. Auden's response to Freudian psychology was motivated by a sense of frustration at the destructiveness of civilization and a conviction of the impossibility of a solution of the human problem outside the realm of the human psyche. Auden's subjective reaction against the social phenomena of the thirties is represented by his Freudian fixation. Unlike Brecht, who could assimilate all the dimensions of the period, Auden concentrated on the psychological aspect. Such fixation in the face of the strong events of the time, would necessarily make the writer adopt a particular style of treatment of the social problem which, in turn determines the nature of his response to the Brechtian impact. Hence, the technique of **On the Frontier** manifests Auden's response to the senual aspects of Brecht's alienation technique as manifested in the use of songs delivered by choruses and music accompanying the martial and soldier songs. However ,the use of music and songs is more limited than either **The Dog Beneath the Skin** or **The**

Ascent of F6. Yet, **On the Frontier** contains a new device that acts as a means of mediating between audience and stage, namely, the device of the radio. The radio is used as a means of communicating and exchanging news between Ostnia and Westland across the frontier. In this manner, "the impact of public events on private lives can be represented and also the reactions of the two familities can be paralleled and contrasted."(52) In an essay published in 1926, Brecht mentions the importance of the radio as an apparatus for instruction :

> As for the radio's object, I don't think it can consist merely in prettifying public life... It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion : change this apparatus over from distribution to communication... Any attempt by the radio to give a truly public character to public occasions is a step in the right direction... As for the technique that needs to be developed for all such operations, it must follow the prime objective of turning the audience not only into pupils but into teachers. It is the radio's formal task to give these educational operations an interesting turn, i.e. to ensure that these interests interest people. Such an attempt by the radio to put its instruction into an

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52. M. Spears, **op. cit.,** p. 103.

> artistic form would link up with the efforts of modern artists to give art an instructive character.(53)

Auden's use of the radio in **On the Frontier** has an educative value which aims at approximating the public and the private interests, namely to fight against war. However, the anti-war and anti-fascism content of the play is conveyed through "a curiously generalized, featureless allegory about the agony of war."(54) Hence, Audence and Isherwood's last collaboration represents, despite its positive use of some Brechtian technical devices, their last attempt to experiment with epic techniques. The use of verse in alternation with prose as an alienation effect to prevent identification and illusion, is not applied in **On the Frontier,** as the play is almost wholly written in prose. Here the prose serves a traditional structure, namely to convey the dramatic situation and to befit the character. Hence, from the point of view of technique, **On the Frontier** is more traditional than either **The Dog Beneath the Skin** or **The Ascent of F6.** Its propagandist content is muddled by the insertion of symbolism to convey the abstract idea of frontier, which is the result of the psychological interpretation of the theme. Brecht's analysis of fascism and his revelation of the concrete conditions out of which capitalism and exploitation arise is dispensed with, leaving

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53. Brecht, trans. **J. Willett, op. cit.,** p. 52.
54. K. Worth, **op. cit.,** pp. 109-110.

a shallow and uninteresting propaganda that lacks the spirit of epic drama.

Auden and Isherwood's style of treatment of the social themes in the three plays may be summed up in two major points: (1) The representation of the by-products of capitalism rather than the causes that bring about these by-products.(2) The concentration on the characters' psychological reaction to situations more than on the actual situations. From the point of view of technique, their use of Brechtian alienation technique registers a specific response to the sensual aspects of the epic technique, that is, the devices of song and music in isolation from the intellectual content. Hence, the Brechtian alienation technique is manipulated in a manner that brings it closer to the English traditional forms of Christmas pantomime and music hall. This might explain the fact that Auden's works for the stage, since **On the Frontier,** have been only operas.

Since Auden could not solve the crucial problem faced by the rebel, as Camus formulated it : "Is it possible to find a rule of conduct outside the realm of religiion and of absolute values ?,"(55) he later relapsed into conservatism and religious thinking and abandoned rebellion altogether. The issue of rebellion is closely connected with creativity and imitation as the

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55. Albert Camus, **op. cit.,** p. 27.

two sides of influence. Since, according to the spiral movement, the higher level represents revolution and progression (i.e. and the lower level represents rebellion and regression (i.e. imitation), Auden and Isherwood's plays can be classified under rebellion and regression in their relation to the Brechtian tradition. One of the main reasons why the drama of Auden and Isherwood did not keep pace with the development of Auden's poetry is due to the topicality of their plays. In his valuable two-volume research on **Modern Drama,** Prof. A. Metwally makes the following conclusion, with which we choose to conclude this chapter :

> Auden and Isherwood ran after the illusion of propagating their leftist ideas, and forgot that they were writing poetic drama. They had a sort of romantic escape from the society with which they were discontented, and opened their eyes to find that they were pursuing a mirage. They lost their faith in Communism and so their enthusiasm dwindled and the main feature of their inspiration dried up... And since these dramatists concentrated on politics, they were left helpless when these ideas changed. They recognized the fact that up from the start they based their dramatic works on a false and unstable foundation; and so they left the dramatic field without founding a dramatic school or leaving a deep impact on English drama. Nor did they develop their technique, as Brecht had done when he left behind the

didactic plays of his middle period to the major works in which didacticism is subtly interwoven in the structure of the play, as it is in **Mother Courage** or **Galileo.**(56)

Concluding, we may safely accept Auden's own words concerning the impact of Brecht's plays upon his brief dramatic interlude as being only "very slight." As Auden could not have read Brecht's plays at the time he wrote his plays because of his weak knowledge of the German language, and the fact that he saw **The Threepenny Opera** while in Germany with his poor knowledge of German, do not make Brecht a strong influence. This limits the impact of Brecht's theatre on Auden and Isherwood's plays to the practical use of stage devices, music and songs. Despite the fact that Brecht's theatre does not represent a major influence on Auden and Isherwood's drama, we can say that Brecht was one among many and more effective factors to which Auden was exposed while in Germany in the thirties and possibly later on in his life as he came into actual contact with Brecht at a time when Auden had stopped writing dramatic works. However, Brecht's own appreciation of Auden and Isherwood's experiments with the technique of the revue, despite the many reservations he makes, gives credit to the limited artistic value of their plays.

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56. A.A. Metwally, **Studies in Modern Drama** (Vol. II) (Beirut: Arab University, 1071), pp. 65-66.

CHAPTER II

JOHN OSBDORNE'S DILEMMA : USING BRECHT'S TECHNIQUE FOR NON-BRECHTIAN ENDS

Proceeding from the conclusions reached in Chapter 1, an examination of the development of the impact of Brecht's theatre on contemporary English drama will be attempted by tracing this impact on Osborne's theatre. The object of the examination is to show how far the conclusions may or may not be applied to Obsorne's theatre. This, in turn, will determine whether or not there is any theatrical school in the English theatre that has been founded through Brecht. Proceeding from the assumption that a school must necessarily possess general characteristics, we will trace these general characteristics in Osborne's theatre, and then try to see whether they exist unchanged or in variation, or even in an innovation form. We will then determine whether there is a theatrical school in contemporary English drama founded on Brecht's theatre, or whether the impact of Brecht on contemporary English drama is individual and does not amount to forming a school of any kind.

The major theme in Osborne's plays, which forms the pivotal idea and around which all other secondary themes revolve, is man's loneliness and isolation from and by the forces of society.

His notorious invective and anger directed at the representatives and guardians of the British Establishment — aristocracy, royalty, the church, the press, and the politicians — who cause man's loneliness and isolation, are outproducts of this overwhelming sense of self-alienation by and from the social order. Osborne's treatment of the problem of man's self-alienation is represented on the level of personal and individual estrangement under a system of social relations which has produced the social norm of conformity to the social reality represented by the institutions of the Establishment. According to Osborne, the individual who rejects the norms of conformity and tries to assert his individuality and to practice his distinctive human qualities is bound to be alienated by society. He is branded by society as a misfit and soon becomes an outcast and a social failure. In short, according to Osborne, to be dealienated in an alienated and alienating society, that is, to try to control the Establishment-controlled human identity, is a tragic dilemma in which contemporary man is caught up.

Within Osborne's world view, man's self-alienation is induced by a power — though it is identifiable in the forces of the Establishment — is nevertheless non-identifiable because it assumes a larger-than-life dimensions. The ambivalence between identity and non-identity produces a tragic, irreconcilable conflict which constitutes the dilemma of man's existence. However, rather than eliminate this power which is causing man's unhappiness (which is inevitably impossible since the power acquires a

super-human character), or surrender to nihilistic despair, Osborne chooses to assert his anger and rejection (and those of his characters) of what he recognizes as an insoluble human condition the social condition is ultimately inverted into a static, human condition to which man must either reconcile himself or ignore it altogether. But since he cannot ignore it, though he might succeed in temporarily evading it, he must occasionally rise above it, however, only by voicing his torrents of invective — as long as his voice can support it — at the miserable state, though his voice is likely to weaken or completely die out in the process. In this sense, Osborne stresses the reified nature of the forces of Establishment and, at the same time, makes a fetish out of these forces by making them appear as socially uncontrollable. By mystifying the historical nature and the class element of these forces, Osborne mistakes the appearance for the essence and, thus, fixes what is socially conditioned and historically changeable, into a constant and static human condition. By turning the essentially dynamic class society and class antagonism into static polarities, Osborne is neutralizing the conflict and making it acceptable and even encouraging a reconciliation and a resignation to that situation. Apologizing for Osborne's class position. Carter writes :

> Curiously Osborne seems to have accepted the existence of those barriers (class barriers), for in the hapless plight of most of his heroes he might well be saying, "there is the class wall, struggle as you might,

you won't scale it, so why not accept it ?(1)

By attempting an analysis of particular plays by Osborne we will trace the development of his major theme with the object of finding out how far he could overcome the dilemma of using Brechtian alienation technique for obviously non-Brechtian ends. For that purpose, we will concentrate upon three plays which are usually popularly acclaimed for their affinity with Brechtian drama, namely, **Luther** and **A Subject of Scandal and Concern** among the historical plays, and **The Entertainer.**

Luther, being a historical play about a major historical figure, provides ample opportunity of relating it to Brecht's historical plays in general, and in tracing specific points of contact between it and **The Life of Galileo** in particular, in terms of the concept of alienation and the dialectical movement in spiral.

To achieve that object we will attempt a close analysis of **Luther,** in the course of which cross references to **The Life of Galileo** will be made in order to stress major points of similarity and differences between the two works and their respective authors.

In the opening scene, the communa! confesion scene,

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1. Alan Carter, **John Osborne** (Ehinburgh : Oliver and Boyd, 1969), p. 137.

Luther's confessions which are a kind of self-revelation, set him off from the rest of the Brothers as a unique and unprecedented case. The unfolding of Luther's dilemma is gradual, gathering in momentum, until it reaches the climatic point with Luther's collapse. In this gradual revelation, Luther (or rather Osborne) lists a number of psychological symptoms : "I am alone. I am alone, and against myself... How can I justify myself ?... How can I be justified ?"(2) Scene two traces this crisis back to Luther's childhood in the manner of a psychiatric session in which the patient, through free association of the mind, recalls his childhood and locates the incidents which are at present causing his disturbance. Here Martin is on the verge of self-discovery ,as a result of which starts his growing sense of unrest, discontent and doubt.

If we relate the dialogue between Luther and Hans during their encounter after Luther's fit at his first Mass, to the end of act 1 scene 1, we will locate the main issue behind Luther's troubles. It is through Luther's relation with his father that the play progresses from Luther's adolescence to his manhood throughout his mature age. It is the prime moving force behind his quest for identity. When Luther rejects and revolts against the authority of this father, he identifies that authority with

2. John Osborne, **Luther** (London : Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 20.

religious belief. He feels that his submission to that authority is crushing his identity. So, his urge to emerge free from his parent's dominaion is intrinsically linked with his search for a genuine identity. He also revolts against the essential cause of parental authority which is inherent in the ten commandments. Hence, his act of rebellion extends to all forms of repressive authority : parental, ecclesiastical and monarchical. His desire to be free from such authorities takes the form of liberating the scripture from any misinterpretation imopsed on it by these authorities, and committing himself to one authority : God.

Luther's explanation of his experience at the Mass serves to clarify this point : "I don't unerstand what happened. I lifted up my head at the host, and, as I was speaking the words, I heard them as if it were the first time ,and suddenly — (pause) they struck at my life."(3) Luther's account of his experience, is a self-analysis which shows a great deal of insight because it registers a typical case of alienation from self. Introducing the concept of alienation, Erich Fromm writes : "By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien."(4) Thus, to be alienated from oneself involves a certain experience. This experience, however, or the "alienation from oneself," consists of the lack or absence of a

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3. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 40.
4. Erich Fromm, **The Sane Society** (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 120.

"sense of self." Commenting on Fromm's definition of the concept, R. Schacht writes :

> ...he (Fromm) asserts this "mode of experience" to be one in which "the person experiences himself as an alien." For this implies an **awareness** that one's "sense of self" is **not** the **proper** one. This would mean that it would be appropriate to speak of alienation from oneself only in connection with cases in which this awareness is present.(5)

However, Luther's experience and his account of it, involve both consciousness and ignorance of the state of alienation. Although he experiences himself as an alien from the situation and from himself in the situation, he does not understand the significance of that experience because he is unaware of the causes which have motivated this experience. He also experiences a sense of wonder and surprise at the strangeness and familiarity of the ritual, and relates that to his own life. Confession, as a Catholic ritual is the direct and immediate cause that brings to surface Luther's feeling of alienation as a conscious feeling. However, so far (at that stage of the play) this incomplete consciousness is actually false consciousness because it involves an experience that is grounded in illusion. This is brought out in the scene

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5. R. Schacht, **op. cit.,** p. 139.

between Luther and Hans. Luther, grudgingly, tells his father about an old experience when his mother beat him till he bled for stealing a nut : "...on that day, for the first time, the pain belonged to me and no one else, it went no further than my body, bent between **my** knees and **my** chin."(6) Hans relates Luther's account of that experience to another, more drastic and crucial one, namely, the night the thunderstorm broke and Luther took it to be a vision, and in a fit of fear, promised St. Anne to become a monk if she saved him. Hans's mockery of his son on account of this incident reveals his conviction that his son is a pathetic creature suffering from pathological fear and indulging in illusion. This, however, sets Luther doubting about the validity of the reason which made him join the holy office. He starts doubting whether the experience which prompted him to do so is grounded in reality or in illusion. Consequently, Luther seeks to remedy this experience of absence of the sense of self by another more positive one, namely, that of justification of self. This, in turn, will substitute the false consciousness with the true consciousness.

The idea of justification of self by faih is Luther's counteraction against the authority of the church. This reaction takes the form of his direct and concentrated attack on the church's manner of justification, the letters of indulgence. The issue of

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6. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 44.

justification is a reflection of Luther's position vis-à-vis the authority of the church. His compaign against indulgence touches at the very foundation of the authority and power of the Roman Church and that of the Pope. It reveals it as of a purely mercantile nature, or as Brecht would call it "die Geschäfte" (business). The exploitation of religion as a means of securing the domination of the church is what Luther loathes and fights against. This is presented in act 2, scene 1, which stands in sharp contradiction with the previous and following scenes by being more public, and by exposing the commodity orientation of religion under the authority of the pope. The vulgar manner of Tetzel in advertizing the letters of indulgence, which is represented in a manner similar to T.V. commercials, makes the point shockingly clear. It is this aspect of religion which Luther classifies as the original "works" as distinct from and opposed to "faith". Luther's idea of justification by faith revolves round man's commitment to God. Man, Luther believes, is not free because God determines his life. Therefore, he excludes works because they do not redeem man. What he means by 'works' is the practice of rituals, which he conceives of as practical and Catholic determinations of religious faith forming a barrier between man and God. Religious rituals are for Luther a reification of religious faith; they are the object transformed into a thing or fetishized. Thereforce, to free religious faith from this state of alienation, Luther suggests that man should be free to interpret the scripture without appropriating himself to an authority and without the mediation of the church. Hence, he

makes man's relation to God an immediate and direct one. Luther wants to liberate the scripture, which had become alienated through the institution of the church. Therefore, the necessity that man should confront the scripture from inside not from outside. Consequently, man becomes alone in confronting the scripture, the scripture becomes a means to salvation, and man becomes an end in himself.

Luther's separation of faith from works points to two interrelated issues : (1) identification between objectification and reification; (2) interiorization of faith. Luther identifies any form of objectification as reification. He thinks that the objetification of faith, i.e. transforming it into an object, destroys faith, and that the objetification of faith in any institution is a loss of man's freedom. Hence, in order to restore his freedom, man has to isolate himself from those institutions. The second issue is the result of the first. Due to Luther's belief that man is helpless towards God's will, he maintains that all man can do is worship God and follow what Christ says. Thus, Luther's reaction towards authority takes the form of interiorization of faith, an act which implies an internal rather than an external liberation. This, however, is not an elimination of alienation but an internalization of that state, and it is one of the consequences of separating work and belief.

Luther's separation of faith and work implies a separation of religious authority (embodied in the ecclesiastical order of

the church) and civil authority (represented in the hierarchy of the state). The question whether separation of religion and state, being the major achievement of the Reformation, is a consequence or a cause of the movement of religious reformation led by Luther, is raised in the play by Luther's relation to the authority in terms of rebellion and revolution.

The words 'rebel' and 'revolutionary' are mentioned twice in the play, one directly and the other indirectly. It is mentioned indirectly by Luther's supporter, Staupitz, when he confronts Luther with the reality of his rebellion against authority :

> You see, you think you admire authority, and so you do, but unfortunately, you can't submit to it. So what you do, by your exaggerated attention to the Rule, you make the authority ridiculous. And the reason you do that is because you're determined to substitute that authority with something else-yourself.(7)

On the other hand, the same opinion is directly stated by Luther's opponent, Cajetan, the papal legate and Rome's highest representative in Germany : "You're not a good old revolutionary,

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7. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 53.

my son, you're just a common rebel."(8) Both supporter and opponent believe that Luther is a rebel who adheres to rathei than rejects authority. However, we should also listen to Luther's defence against this accusation. In his dialogue with Staupitz, Luther states : "Surely, this must be the last age we're living in. There can't be any more left but the black bottom of the buckett."(9) In confronting Cajetan, Luther denies the authority of the pope over men for the simple reason that the pope is an ordinary man : "He seems a good man, as popes go. But it's not much for a world that sings for reformation. I'd say that's a hymn for everyone."(10) Here, Luther sounds like a revolutionary who wants a radical change, a change, which for the religious authority of the time, would mean the destruction of the unity between the church and the feudal class as a strong social force.

Luthter's reformation has two main aspects ,a religious and a social aspect. The first concerns religious belief, and the second centres round belief in relation to society and social change. Within the limits of religious belief, Luther transforms it from an external relation into an internal one, by eliminating the mediation of the church and by relying on man's individual interpretaion of the scripture. He liberates man from the au-

8. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 73.
9. **Ibid.,** p. 54.
10. **Ibid.,** p. 71.

thority of the church and subjects him to belief, by making religious belief a personal matter between man and God. However, by freeing religious belief from the hands of the church and placing it in the hands of a new authority, Luther retains the essence of religious belief, namely, belief within the confines of a supernatural power. Consequently, we can say hat in terms of religious belief, Luther is a rebel. On the other hand, by relating religious belief directly to man ,he turns it from an absolute into a relative. Man, as a changing and changeable creature, would be now the sole norm of regulating social relations and not any institution standing above man. As a result, the church is reduced to a social institution and social relations and behaviour, including religious behaviour, are subjected to free examination and interpretation without resorting to the church as an authority.

One of the major objects and achievements of the Reformation has been the solidifaction of individualism. By shaking the absolute, social relations (embodied in the religious community and incarnated in the religious institutions) have been weakened. That is, Christian religious absolute has been deinstitutionalized and thus given way to the emergence of the initiative spirit of the individual. Hence, the major characteristic of the Reformation is a tendency towards individualism and subjectivism. This tendency which has various physical manifestations, is the external reflection of the internalization of faith. Religion is no longer a determining factor in guiding society and

thought. It is only man's belief that counts, although that belief is guided by supernatural power.

But, if Luther is a rebel in terms of religious belief, i.e. does not effect a radical change in that belief, he is definitely a revolutionary in terms of social change. Here arises a dialectical contradiction between the rebel and the revolutionary. The life of the historical Luther implies this dialectical movement in spiral, progressing upwards from rebellion to revolution. In attempting to answer the question whether the play suceeds in conveying this dialectical contradiction as a driving force behind Luther's life and progress, we will determine how Osborne can be considered a disciple of Brecht's in applying the dialectical movement in spiral used by Brecht in **The Life of Galileo.** In other words, whether Osborne's dramatization of Luther's life brings into focus the dialectical unity of the psychological and the social dimensions of Luther's problem in his confrontation with the authority.

In the first two acts, which constitute two thirds of the play, Osborne concentrates on the religious aspect of Luther's life as a liberator from religious authority, by empasizing his idea of justification by faith and the free interpretation of the gospel. However, there is a very faint streak, almost undetectable, which relates Luther's religious doctrines to the social and economic reality of the time. This link is presented as part of Luther's psychological dilemma and his search for identity

through his relation with his father. Osborne makes a furtive hint to Hans profession at the beginning of act 1 scene 3 :

LUCAS : Your father's doing very well indeed, Martin. He's got his own investment in the mine now, so he's beginning to work for himself if you see what I mean. That's the way things are going everywhere now.(11)

Although Luther expresses a rather weak sense of the social and economic significance of his preachings in the same scene, yet he can recognize his father's strong but impulsive insight, though he can only relate it to the idea of faith and work, i.e. to the realm of theology. In act 2, scene 2, Luther tells Staupitz:

> ...he (Hans) made a discovery years and years ago that took me sweat and labour to dig out of the earth for myself... he always knew that works alone don't save any man. Mind you, he never said anything about faith coming first.(12)

The reference to Hans profession has an important historical significance. It is an indication of a historical fact, namely, the rise and development of capitalism and protestantism. In **The**

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11. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 35.
12. **Ibid.,** p. 55.

Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, published in the form of two long articles in 1904 and 1906, Max Weber attempts to relate Protestantism to the rise of capitalism. Although he rejects the Marxist explanation that Protestanism is an ideological reflection of the economic changes accompanying the early development of capitalism, Weber concentrates on the close connection between protestantism and economic rationality through his explanation of Luther's concept of the "calling." Weber maintains that :

> ...the notion of the calling and the mode in which it is employed in Protestant beliefs, is that it serves to bring the mundane affairs of everyday life within an all-embracing religious influence. The calling of the individual is to fulfil his duty to God through the moral conduct of his day-to-day life. This implies the emphasis of Protestantism away from the Catholic ideal of monastic isolation, with its rejection of the temporal, into worldly pursuites.(13)

This aspect of the Reformation is presented in the play through Luther's relationship with his father. The socio-economic dimensions of the reformation are revealed through the character of Hans. He is the incarnation of the new rising class of bourgeoi-

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13. Anthony Giddens, **Capitalism and Modern Social Theory** (London : Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 127.

sie, and he represents the economic interests of that class which are related to the social and economic changes which have modified the medieval forms of community and labour. He unconsciously recognizes that the old social relations under the church and feudal system are an obstacle in the way of the free development of the new productive forces, and that in order to remove these obstacles, authority must be transfered to the individual who represents the economic interests of the new class who own the means of production. Hence, the play presents protestantism as the ideological justification of bourgeois economy : capitalism. However, this does not mean that Osborne adopts a Marxist interpretation of the historical significance of the Reformation. The reason why he fails to present this issue in its entirety, i.e. through a wide historical perspecive, is that he narrows it down to a psychological issue by concentrating on Luther's crisis of identity. The result of the psychological approach is Osborne's concentration on the religious content of Luther's reformation. By emphasizing the religious content Osborne ignores the more important dimensions of protestantism. Whereas the emphasis of matters of religious nature is acceptable from Luther as a man of religion, it should hardly be the concern of a contemporary writer like Osborne. He should rather have directed his concern to the various dimensions of man, concentrating on the true essence of man as a social and political being. Yet, Osborne, by glossing over the socioeconomic content of Luther's reformation, makes the social content of his play a negative one. The result is man's alienation

from his essential being, being social and political. By religious reformation Osborne understands that the gospel should be made non-political. He concentrates on the issue of substituting a religious ruler with a civil one, more than on the social dimension, in relation to liberating man from religious authority. If society is guided by religious authority, the extrication of this authority would mean its substitution by man. Yet, leaving society in a vacuum, as Osborne does in the play, is due to an absence of a futuristic vision. One of the aspects in the play that endorses this view, is Osborne's heavy reliance upon documentation, not only by quoting historical events but by quoting full passages from Luther's documents.(14) He presents historic reality as it was, like history books, without any interpretation. This kind of documentary history is diametrically opposed to Brecht's epic and historical plays which represent his philosophical drama.

By concentrating on documentation in most acts of the play, Osborne makes his audience live in the past, thus alienating them from the present and the future as two major components of the time factor. This fixation of time is at the same time alienation of time, and thus excludes a major dimension of man

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14. In his article, "Luther and Mr. Osborne," Gordon Rupp lists a number of occasions in which Osborne quotes entire passages from Luther's documents and sermons. **The Cambridge Quarterly,** vol. I, 1965-66, pp. 30-31.

i.e. future, which is the result of the absence of the futuristic vision. While Brecht in **The Life of Galileo** moved history to the future across the present by dislocating time or historicizing it, Osborne makes a fixation of one of the three moments of time, namely, the past. Historicizing, in its essence, i.e. as a means of presenting the problem of alienation and man's liberation from alienation, is absent in **Luther.** Consequently, the play remains within the bounds of historical documentation and does not transcend it to give a contemporary vision that would reflect on the twentieth century. The reason is that the play presents history on a psychological level, treating Luther's personal problems within the limits of a narrow individual perspective. Hence, Ferrar comments :

> Clearly Osborne has great temperamental affinity for Luther the man, but as a play of idea **Luther** disintegrates... In this play, the antagonists may be sketched with more assured craftsmanship, but they are inadequate opponents if we are meant to believe Luther's conflict with the church is as perilous as his psychological conflict. The main problem with Luther is that it lacks... a sharp clarity of conception.(15)

On the other hand, Brecht's approach in **The Life of Galileo**

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15. Harold Ferrar, **John Osborne** (New York & London : Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 28.

has an ideological basis being wider and more comprehensive than Osborne's mere psychological approach, because it deals with Galileo's problem in terms of the concept of alienation and tackles history within the perspective of class and society.

This leads us to discuss Osborne's historical perspective versus that of Brecht's, and to examine the extent to which **Luther** can be considered a historical play in the Brechtian sense i.e. in the sense that **The Life of Galileo** is a Brechtian historical play. Osborne states explicitly his idea about history in relation to **Luther :**

> It's difficult to pin-point just how Luther started. It's been brewing over a long period. I wanted to write a play about religious experience and various other things, and this happened to be the vehicte for it. Historical plays are usually anathema to me, but this isn't a costume drama. I hope that it won't make any difference if you don't know anything about Luther himself, and I suspect hat most people don't. In fact the historical character is almost incidental. The method is Shakespeare's or almost anyone else's you can think of.(16)

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16. J. Osborne, "That Awful Museum," Interview with R. Findlater, **Twentieth Century,** February 1961.

Osborne's intention to convey an extra-historical content in **Luther** is actually to interpret history from a psycho-analytic point of view and, in this way, to give the play a contemporary character.

In **The Life of Galileo** Brecht presents his vision of the historical Galileo through the problem of the social and moral responsibility of the scientist and leader of change in an alienated society. Here Brecht turned a personal crisis of a scientist versus authority into an ideological issue with social and moral dimensions, by revealing the various contradictions of society in the relations between characters. He raised the problem of the moral responsibility of the scientist towards social change in terms of the class struggle in particular, and towards the progress of humanity at large, in general. But Osborne did the opposite : he reduced the ideological dimensions of Luther's reformation (i.e. the political and socio-economic aspects in their relation to the class struggle) to Luther's personal and psychological crisis of identity. By presenting Luther as a individual versus the authority of the church, Osborne reduced the historical significance of the reformation to psychological problems, such as parental repression, lack of love and search for security. The differences in treatment point to a difference in the world outlook of both authors, and in particular the understanding and attitude of both towards the problem of alienation.

Brecht treated Galileo's problem through a Marxian inter-

pretaion of alienation, ie. man's separation from his products and his exploitation in a class society, and its solution, man's liberation from exploitation and the necessity of man's control over his products. Hence, Brecht treated the concept of alienation within the frame of the epoch, i.e. 20th century. Although he was dealing with a historical figure and a historical epoch, he did that in the light of the concept of alienation. This, in turn, enabled him to move the problem from its historical temporality, the Middle Ages, across the following historical epochs, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment to post-Enlightenment, and project them into the present of the 20th century (1930s and 1940s), as a leap forward to a future free from alienation and exploitation. This is the path of history as Brecht conceived of it, guided by his futuristic vision of a de-alienated humanity. Technically, he achieved the effect of his content by dislocating time through the use of historicizing as an alienation effect. Hence, it was the content which determined Brech't use of the epic technique of alienation effects.

Brecht understood alienation in Galileo's time through the succeeding age and not only through Galileo's age. Hence, we will judge Osborne's treatment of alienation in **Luther** from a contemporary understanding, and particularly from the standpoint of Brecht's interpretation, which conceives of alienation as man's separation from his products as a result of private property relation and the division of labour. Consequently, we say that the concept of alienation in Osborne's **Luther** is in-

troduced through man's separation from the institutions that are causing his alienation. Osborne's contention is that as long as these institutions will continue to exist on these grounds, i.e. as separate from man, controlling and guiding his life, the only alternative for man is to find his liberation outside the limits of these institutions. This is the essence of Luther's doctrine of the interiorization of faith as introduced in the play. But Osborne is mistaken in dismissing these institutions as unchangeable and as eternally alienating and alienated from man. He, thus, overlooks the fact that the institutions can be freed from that state and returned to their creator, man. From this angle, faith can be seen in a different light, namely, as alienated and non-alienated at the same time. On the one hand, it is non-alienation in the sense that man refuses to accept the institution as independent from man. On the other hand, alienation arises as a result of overlooking the possibility of restoring these institutions to man. In other words, to consider the institutions as man-made and to search for the causes that have led to the separation and to man's alienation. This is what Brecht does in **The Life of Galileo**, and it is exactly that which makes him superior to Osborne as regards his tratment of alienation. The paradox here lies in the fact that the advanced interpretation comes from an author, Brecht, preceding another, Osborne, whereas the opposite should have happened. Hence, we can conclude that Osborne's **Luther** is a regressive step in the Brechtian tradition.

A comparison between the trial secenes in both plays (the Inquisition scene in **The Life of Galileo** versus the Diet of Worms scene in **Luther**), will be attempted in order to show the difference between Brecht and Osborne's social position as reflected in their respective plays. The trial scene in both plays crystallizes the issue of the moral responsibility of both figures towards the masses and social change. The effect resulting from the contradiction between scenes 1 and 2 in act 3, points to an important fact, namely, the rise and progress of a new era (Renaissance) at the expense of the masses of peasants. The two scenes set up the two conflicting forces face to face :

> The Diet of Worms, April 18th, 1521. A gold frontcloth, and on it, in the brightest suchshine of colour, a bold, joyful representation of this unique gathering of princes, electors, dukes, ambassadors, bishops, counts, barons, etc... The medieval world dressed up for the Renaissance.
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> Wittenberg, 1525. A marching hymn, the sound of canon and shouts of mutilated men. Smoke, a shattered banner bearing the cross and wooden shoe of the Bundschuh, emblem of the Peasants' Movement. A small chapel altar at one side of the stage opposite the pulpit. Centre is a small handcart, and beside it lies the bloody bulk of a peasant's corpse. Down-

stage stands the KNIGHT, fatigued, despondent, stained and dirty.(17)

It is the princes, electors, dukes, ambassadors, bishops, counts and barons up against peasants and knights. Now the question which poses itself is : on whose side does Luther stand ? At the Diet of Worms Luther refuses to retract and holds on to his ideas. Yet, the next scene presents Luther as a traitor to the peasants, having supported the ruling class against them. The contradiction between the two scenes expresses the contradiction between Luther and the peasants, or the individual and the masses. The question whether Luther refuses to recant in public while recanting in actuality, and whether his position towards the peasants is in perfect consistency with his views which he defends at the Diet of Worms, is dramatized in the conflict between Luther and the Knight. The presentation of the contradiction between the masses represented by the Knight and Luther has a double effect: a positive and a negative effect. The negative effect is presented by Luther's argument at the trial. He refuses to recant and insists : "What I ask, by the Mercy of God, is let someone expose my errors in the light of the Gospels."(18) This means that Luther asks that his words be justified by the words in the gospels and not by any external

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17. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** pp. 81-86.
18. **Ibid.,** p. 83.

factor whatsoever. On this ground he refuses to recant, and on the same ground he refuses to listen to the peasants' demands who rose up against their feudal lords relying on his teachings. Although Luther upholds the same views in confronting both forces, the result is the defeat of the peasants. This determines Luther's position, of which the Knight, who represents the positive aspect of the contradiction, is perfectly aware. The Knight confronts Luther with the truth of his social position and the economic interests which his religious ideas serve :

> They say, you know, that the profit motive — and I'm sure you know all about that one — they say the profit motive was born with the invention of double entry book-keeping in the monasteries. Book-keeping. In the monasteries, and ages before any of us had ever got round to burning them down. But, you know, for men with such a motive, there is only really one entry. The profit is theirs, the loss is someone else's and usually they don't even bother to write it up.(19)

Galileo's position towards the masses, on the other hand, is of a more dialectical nature. Although he wants to place his science in the service of the masses, Galileo is at the same

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19. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 88.

time conscious of the fact that he deals with an alienated reality under the authority of the ruling classes : feudalism and the church. Therefore, he choses to recant publicly in order to realize his futuristic vision by concluding his **Discorsi,** namely, the elimination of the contradiction between science and the masses through the social function of science which is to be materialized in a society governed by reason. Here Galileo's futuristic vision is a transcendence of the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, and this is lacking in **Luther.** Although the historical Luther is reported to have said in front of the Diet of Worms that "he must be convinced of his error before he would recant, not from Holy Scripture but 'by evident reason' "(20) — a statement which makes him a forerunner of Descartes — Osborne discards this important historical fact completely. This is another proof of regression in Osborne's play pointing to his inability to interpret the higher (Enlightenment) through the lower level (Reformation). By confining himself within the level itself (i.e. Reformation), Osborne is unable to realize the historical significance of Luther's argument at the Diet of Worms and, therefore, eliminates it. This regression points to a negative treatment of the dialectical movement and the concept of alienation. Osborne's understanding of Luther's reformation is mechanical and one-sided. Unlike Brecht's dialectical thought and treatment of the problem of his

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20. Gordon Rupp, **op. cit.,** p. 38.

hero, Osborne eliminates many dimensions and uses only one in his interpretation of Luther's problem. Osborne's one-sided interpretation of history is due to his psycho-analytic treatment of history. Psychology, being the outcome of the interaction between man and society, provides a clear understanding of the individual psyche in relation to sociology due to the intimate interrelatedness of both fields. Consequently, Osborne's interpretation with one factor, the psychological, results in mechanic determinism. By concentrating on instincts as determined and unchangeable and as inherent in man and not the outcome of external conditions, Osborne makes man a fixed and unchangeable entity. Early in the play, Staupitz tells Luther : "you're obssessed with the Rule because it servces very nicely as a protection for you... Protection against the demands of your own instincts, that's what."(21) As if Luther's revolt against the existing order is solely motivated by his instincts. Whereas, according to Brecht's spiral movement, interpretation of human nature and social relations should be made in terms of the variables and not the constants.

One of the reasons accounting for Osborne's regressive, one-sided interpretation of history is the source which he chose to derive his basic information from, which he then used as raw material for his formulation of Luther's character. The main,

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21. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 53.

and almost only, source which Osborne used in composing his dramatic version of that historical figure is Erik H. Erikson's biography **Young Man Luther** subtitled "A Study in Psychoanalysis and History." In the opening chapter of the book, the author defines his psychoanalytic approach to history :

> This "Study in Psychoanalysis and History" will re-evaluate a segment of history (here the youth of a great reformer) by using psychoanalysis as a historical tool; but it will also, here and there, throw light on psychoanalysis as a tool of history... Psychoanalysis, like all systems, has its own inner history of development. As a method of observation it takes history; as a system of ideas it makes history.(22)

Osborne adopts Erikson's interpretation of Luther's problem as an "identity crisis," which he defines as :

> I have called the major crisis of adolescence the **identity crisis;** it occurs in that period of the life cycle when each youth must forge for himself some central perspective and direction, some working unity, out of the effective remnants of his childhood and the hopes of his anticipated adulthood; he must detect

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22. Erik H. Erikson, **Young Man Luther** (New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 1958), pp. 16-17.

some meaningful resemblance between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be... only in a crisis, individual or historical, does it become obvious what a sensitive combination of capacities created in the distant past and of opportunities divided in the present; a combination of totally unconscious preconditions developed in individual growth and of social conditions created and recreated in the precarious interplay of generations. In some young people, in some classes, at some periods, the crisis will be clearly marked off as a critical period, a kind of "second birth," apt to be aggravated either by widespread neuroticisms or by pervasive ideological unrest. Some young individual will succumb to this crisis in all manner of neurotic, psychotic, or delinquent behaviour; others will resolve it through participation in ideological movements passionately concerned with religion or politics, nature or art. Still others, although suffering and deviating dangerously through what appears to be a prolonged adolescence, eventually come to contribute an original bit to an emerging style of life : the very danger which they have sensed has forced them to mobilize capacities to see and act, to dream and play, to design and construct, in new ways.(23)

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23. E. Erikson, **op. cit.,** p. 37.

Proceeding from his concept of history, Erikson applies it to Luther's personality and comes out with a judgment upon which he bases his own study of Luther's life. Erikson reduces Luther's psychological problems to what he calls "identity crisis" and makes his diagnosis a point of departure of his study in order to reveal how Luther's "individual 'case' became an important, an historical 'event,' and for formulations concerning the spiritual and political identity crisis."(24) This psychoanalytic method,which excludes labour as a socio-economic activity in its interpretation of history, is Osborne's basic source in his treatment of **Luther.** If we accept Erikson's view of history, we will be confronted with the ultimate idea that man is neurotic and civilization, as a product of man, is neurotic and against man. Hence, it would follow that alienation is inherent in the making of civilization which is rooted in repression and sense of guilt. Consequently, socio-economic factors would never alter the state of alienation, because it has its roots in psychology and this psychological basis has a psychoanalytic nature. Hence, alienation is an internal state, and the external is the outcome of repressed instincts. It follows from this view that alienation is an internal condition, inherent in man, a denial of the possibility of liberation of reason. Any historical movement directed towards liberation of man's reason such as the Reformation and the Enlightenment, would be considered as illusions in the light

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24. E. Erikson, **op. cit.,** p. 22.

of the view that alienation is inherent in man as long as he is creator of history. The result of Obsorne's adoption of the psychoanalytic view of history is the reduction of Luther's protest against the Catholic Church and his religious reformation to his conflict with his father and his personal crisis of identity. The results are his inability to conceive of the Reformation as a preparatory stage leading up to the Enlightenment. By concentrating upon Luther's personal psychological troubles and conflicts, Osborne makes his audience "see the great rebel, (but) miss the leader.".(25)

The comparison between Galileo's trial and recantation, and Luther's trial and incrimination, showed the difference between the social and class contents in the treatment of both situations. Thus, technically both situations are also far apart. Osborne understands and uses Brecht's epic narrative technique to report after the event, and not as a comment that links it to reality by exposing and empasizing its contradictions with the concrete events. In scene 10 in **Galileo,** entitled "A Marketplace," Brecht shows us the procession of the masses in concrete, in their public festivities singing Galileo's scientific triumph, and expressing their total confidence and support for him as a leader of social change. Scene 11 shows Galileo, the cunning, manoeuvering politician who succumbs to authority and shudders at the sight

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25. Gordon Rupp, **op. cit.,** p. 36.

of the instruments of torture, a picture contrary to that of the one the masses have of him. Scene 13, which contains Galileo's recantation, contradicts with scene 10 by being conretely set off against it. Although Galileo's transformation takes place off stage, his disciples on stage expressing their complete faith in his tenacity in front of the inquisition, contradicts with Galileo's actual cant. This contradiction conveys the actual effect of recantation.

In **Luther,** we get no concrete picture of the peasants' reaction to Luther's teachings. Even their uprising is narrated after the event, which does not compensate for the lack of concrete presentation. The use of narration as a technical device to bridge the gap of four years separating the peasants' movement from Luther's trial, shows the technical influence of Brecht on Osborne. However, since it merely reports after the event and fails to relate what is narrated to a concrete reality, it shows "the Brechtian influence at its most destructive."(26) Neither do we see Luther at the time of the Peasants' revolt. The fact that we are not shown the concrete causes of Luther's betrayal to the social revolution because that scene is missing, Luther's transformation is unexplained and mystified. What Osborne should have done was to relate the recurring and fragmentary

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26. Charles Marowitz, "The Ascension of John Osborne," **Tulane Drama Review,** No. 2, Winter, 1962.

hints and references to the new economy with Luther's reformist ideas in one scene that would clarify Luther's social position. But, due to Osborne's purely psychological interests, he could not construct this relation epically, that is, in an appropriate Brechtian manner.

Reviewing the play, Pritchett comments on the technical shortcomings of Osborne's psychological treatment of Luther's character :

> Osborne's failure to fuse the neurotic with the great maker of the Reformation is not a failure of undersdanting although, at one moment, someone is allowed the bright remark that Luther is not a revolutionary but a rebel... The failure is technical. Chronicles have to skip, they run on; they do not build. It takes a Brecht to thread an allegory through them. At one or two points Osborne funks a climax and jumps to the situation that follows it. Far too much of his **Luther** is reporting after the event... We are shown the objector, but not the objector swept on by events.(27)

As a result of the psychological content of **Luther,** the epic

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27. V.S. Pritchett, "Operation Osborne," **New Statesman,** 4 August 1961, p. 163.

technique as used by Osborne produces an effect contrary to that intended by Brecht. The socio-economic and historical dimensions of Brecht's epic technique are narrowed down to serve Osborne's psycho-analytic study of his hero. Commenting on the epic technique of **Luther, Trussler writes:**

> For all its epic trappings, however, **Luther** remains most successful as a psycho-analytical study of its eponymous hero : for when it attempts to relate the man's inner struggle to his religious and political charisma, the play obscures instead of mutually illuminating these two aspects of a complex personality... Thus, it is not to any inherent weakness in Brechtian style of epic theatre that the play's apparent divergence along parallel lines of development can be attributed. Rather, the fault lies in Osborne's own failure to complement his portrayal of Luther as an individual by demonstrating that individual's power over others: so that many of the episodes, instead of being self-explanatory in proper epic fashion, become merely fragmentary.(28)

Osborne's presentation of Brecht's episodic style fails to unite the episodes into a unified whole. His emphasis on the psycholo-

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28. Simon Trussler, **John Osborne** (London : Longman, 1969), pp. 17-18.

gical aspects of Luther's problem separates the subjective from the objective factors instead of uniting them by locating the dialectical unity between the two factors. Hence, the episodes, instead of working on a multi-dimensional level as they do in Brecht's play where the displacement of the particular is made to project the historically conditioned and universal nature, in **Luther** they follow the sequence of Luther's conflict with the consequence that the universal dimension is introjected in Luther's private problems. Hence, the episodes are structured according to a naturalistic sequential progression, where they coexist by being merely juxtaposed, that is, placed side by side instead of being contradicted to one another in a way that would expose the contradictions in the objective reality. The sequence of the episodes in **Luther** has a cumulative effect which conceals rather than exposes the contradictions and has, therefore, to account for Luther's apparent ambivalent position towards the Peasants' movement by introducing the peasant to narrate after the events. The result of concentrating on Luther's personal problem is empathy following from the identification with the hero's problem throughout the play's action. The episodic scenes in **Galileo,** by being dialectically contradicted, intensify the audience's awareness of the social contradictions inherent in the objective conditions through their contradiction with those in the play. Whereas the episodic structure of **Luther** moves horizontally in a linear sequence, thus, giving only a flat, one-dimensional exposition of a character's reaction to the objective situations without fully exposing these situations. Other minor

Brechtian technical element used in **Luther** is the announcing of the narration from the stage during the breaks of the action, which could rather be attributed to the circus or the music-hall tradition than to a Brechtian influence. In the conclusion to his intensive study of Osborne's plays, Trussler notes :

> It should be noted that Osborne has never mastered the episodic style — or at least, adapted it to his own purposes, of conceiving a fuller social context for a single character. In consequence, he delineates the environment of **Luther**... than the men those environment should be helping to shape... revealing neither periods, places nor persons in any depth, but developing each along its own parallel line...(29)

Alan Carter, in his most apologetic study of Osborne'stheatre, admits the technical deficiencies of **Luther :**

> **Luther** is in essence a narrative, and Osborne is at his weakest as a story-teller, for his true art lies in his feeling for "instinctive theatre" rather than prepared situations. Consequently, Osborne makes the play resemble a medieval historical pageant, full of vivid theatrical moments, such as the Pope's hunting scene,

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29. S. Truslier, **op. cit.,** pp. 216-217.

> Tetzel's indulgence speach, or Martin's soliloquy at the Diet of Worms. Some thread of narrative is provided, however, inaccurate, as we follow Martin through his battle with his own sense of guilt, towards a more personal relationship with God, resting on the basis of simple faith... Once more Osborne embraced certain Brechtian alienation techniques in this production. The back-cloth, a minimal guant tree, allows us to see Martin from the out-side, a position which is further supported by the use of an interlocutor who announces time and place for each scene. The whole emphasis on fleshly torment is Brechtian in its very nature, and whilst we can clearly see the individual rebel, we are not entirely convinced about the religious reformer.(30)

Osborne's concentration on characters (extraordinary, neurotic ones) more than on situations, besides being expressive of his individualistic world view, is a compensation for the lack of consistent ideology or a philosophy(which is clear from Carter's phrase "instinctive theatre") that unites the fragmentary episodes into a unified whole. Whereas Brecht constructed his epic scenes round the concept of alienation and could, thus, rise to the level of philosophical drama, Osborne's treatment of man's self-alienation is fragmentary and lacks philosophical consistency,

30. A. Carter, **op. cit.,** pp. 77-78.

which he attempts to unify by the characters' monologues in which they try to philosophize on life but do nothing more than voice their own obsessions and disappointments. This means that Osborne's failure to relate the particular to the general, or Luther's psychological troubles to the historical significance of his reformation, cannot be solely attributed to a technical failure. In a comparison between Osborne and Brecht's Marowitz brings out the essential difference that separates both dramatists :

> Formalistically, Osborne (like practically every other modern playwright) appears to be under the sway of Bertolt Brecht. Like Brecht, he has strung together a serie of short, stark tableaux. Like Brecht, he has backed them with evocative hangings (flags, banners, tapestries crucifixes). Like Brecht, he employs a narrator to fill in background and make comment. But unlike Brecht, he has not endowed his play with that added intellectual dimension around which the drama may cohere. He has not, in this tart dramatization of history **(Luther),** furnished an underlying concept with which to interpret events.(31)

Hence, Osborne's ambivalent implementation of Brechtian technique points to the basic difference in the world view of the two

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31. Charles Marowitz, **op. cit.,** pp. 176-177.

dramatists. Technically, the separation of the objective and subjective, the particular from the general, results in the fixation on the private indiviual sufferings of Luther. The dramatic result of this shift of emphasis is the involvement of the audience and the enhancement of empathy through identification with Luther's private problem throughout the play's action. Hence, the use of the Brechtian A-effect is reversed :

> Osborne has never whole — heartedly adopted a Brechtian technique for his plots, for Brecht was seeking a detached and objective approach by the use of his **"verfremdung"** effect, whilst Osborne uses it to **increase** our emotional awareness... Osborne is only Brechtian in the sense that he wants his spectator to be an active and not passive member of society. Where Brecht believed that the best form of play to encourage detached rational observation was the epic narrative, with its loose sequence of scenes, Osborne believes that unity can only be given to this sequence by an emotional concentration of one character. Brecht discounted this hero worship and even questioned the value of an absolute standard of ethics. Central characters were presented ambiguously, as in the dialectical treatment of Galileo's recantation. When Osborne chooses to address his audience directly he does so, not by technique, but by charac-

terization, he seeks emotional response first, only later does thinking play its part.(32)

Thus, by inducing emotion, in the sense of emphathy, Osborne reverses of rather distorts Brecht's alienation technique. He uses the technique of alienation to make what is familiar and acceptable appear as strange, which is what Brecht intended the alienation effects to produce, but for a different end, namely, to make the audience accept this strange situation because there is no solution. What Osborne's use of alienation technique actually conveys to the audience is the feeling and the stance that the institutions which they support and the norms to which they conform are the causes of their alienated humanity. However, all they can do is to try and fail to assert their essentially uncontrollable freedom and humanity. For Osborne, the last word in Brecht's statement : the choice of an appropriate technique should mainly be determined by the dramatist's aim to activate the audience socially (i.e. to enable them to control society), would be substituted by the word "emotionally" and, hence, would imply the impossibility to control or change society. Osborne's famous maxim : "I want to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling, they can think afterwards,"(33) is a contradiction in terms. Though by this statement Osborne

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32. A. Carter, **op. cit.,** pp. 164-165.
33. John Osborne, "They Call It Cricket," **Declaration,** ed. Tom Mashler (New York : E.P. Dutton, 1958), p. 146.

aims to combat apathy which has become an unhealthy British feature, arousing the emotion will not, however, free the audience from such apathy because, for one reason, Osborne does not define the nature of this apathy and, hence, does not point to the effective means of overcoming it. Though Brecht was not against emotion, he was decidedly against the kind of emotion that produces empathy in the theatre and prevents critical thiking. Although the kind of emotion which Osborne advocates may only arouse anger, it is a kind of "slow anger" which Brecht's Mother Courage denounces because it canot achieve any real radical change or overcome people's misery. Osborne's statement is self-contradictory for emotional involvement is an inevitable obstacle to think, the clear, rational and critical thought which Brecht was after and which any writer who wants his audience to think should seek. But having involved the audience, emotionally, Osborne robs them of their freedom of critical thought which makes the second half of his maxim, that is, the permission to think afterwards, virtually impossible. In **Luther,** having aroused the audience's emotional response to Luther by indulging in his personal sufferings and concealing the nature of his class position vis-à-vis the Peasants' movement, the audience will be unable to question Luther's position nor will they be able to judge him. Osborne's psychologically oriented treatment of **Luther** made him produce a work that belongs to the Aristotelian rather than to the Brechtian tradition as the two major polarities in the history of the theatre. The technical results of Osborne's

psychological approach are Aristotelian, with the emphasis on the individual in isolation from the social structure, and on catharsis as a result of identification with the character of the hero through empathy. In this sense, Osborne's use of the Brechtian technique is based on a misunderstanding of the appearance of the A-effects for their essence. That is, Osborne regards distancing as an absolute aesthetic device to be used for whatever purpose and disregards that they are, as Brecht described them, "a social measure", not a psychological stimulus, which are meant to activate the audience socially by encouraging them to judge a social system from the point of view of another social system and, hence, to direct them towards radically changing society in the path of this yet unrealized social system. Hence, Brecht's alienation technique has its roots in the inevitability of social change relying upon a concrete understanding of the objective conditions and their historical changeability. Hence, Brecht's concrete and dynamic A-effects are reversed and stood on their head by Osborne by being idealized and psychologized. That is, the A-effects, which are a dynamic artistic means used by Brecht for revolutionary ends, are turned into a static, conventional aesthetic device for psychological ends. Osborne's emphasis on emotion, which amounts to a separation of reason and emotion, besides being an Aristotelian characteristic, is the core of Osborne's anger. It is a sign of his rebellion which like Auden's, is of a negative nature. The transcendence of rebellion to revolution, however, necessitates the integration of both reason and emotion.

We follow this conclusion by trying to visualize a different treatment of the same play, **Luther,** by Brecht. In other words, the way in which Brecht would tackle the same subject of Osborne's play. Our answer is that Brecht's Luther would be qualitatively different from that of Osborne's. This means that Brecht's understanding of the Reformation will be different from that of Osborne's. Brecht would understand the Reformation as a stage leading to the Enlightenment and, as a result, he would treat Luther's concept of interiorization of faith by relating it to the secularization of the institutions. By introducing the dialectical contradiction between man as both a secular and a religious being, Brecht would treat the institutions not as a product of faith but as man-made, and would then emphasize the fact that faith cannot be objectified in a secular institution but can only be reduced to an internal process. In this way, and from the angle of the secularization of institutions, these very institutions can be developed along human lines that would restore to them the human character, and thus be once more owned and controlled by man as one of his products. Osborne introduces Luther's idea of the free interpretation of the gospel in terms of liberating the individual mind from the religious authority of the day : the Roman Church. From this angle, the Enlightenment can be seen as the inevitable development of the liberation from any kind of authority, save that of the mind. Hence, the intimate tie between the Enlightenment and liberalism. However, Osborne does not attempt to

understand the Reformation through the Enlightenment, and concentrates on the external aspects of the movement, namely, the conflict between Luther and the Roman Church. But the real issue at stake is the conflict between Luther's mind and that of the church. Luther's mind strives to be de-alienated whereas that of the church is alienated. This is the essential content of the Reformation which Osborne fails to grasp. Whereas Brecht in his treatment of Galileo was directly influenced by the Enlightenment, which he transcended and developed to post-Enlightenment, guided by his commitment to the socialist cause and by his application of dialectical and historical materialism.

On the other hand, Osborne's emphasis on emotion is the root of his non-commitment to change. This interpretation is included in an article by Osborne :

> Socialism is an experimental idea, not a dogma ; an attitude to turth and liberty, the way people should live and treat each other. Individual definitions are unimportant... I am a writer and my own contribution to a socialist society is to demonstrate those values in my own medium, not to discover the best ways of implementing them.(34)

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34. J. Osborne, "They Call It Cricket," **op. cit.,** p. 143.

Osborne's understanding of socialism as 'an experimental attitude to feeling,"(35) as opposed to dogma, is a falsification based on the wrong opposition of empirical to dogma. The correct opposition should be between dogmatic and critical. The critical is related to the change of reality as an inevitable step following criticism. But limiting oneself to experience and feeling is to bind up oneself within the status quo. Here Osborne follows the English Experimental tradition pioneered by Locke and Hume, which denies the active role of reason, thus denying the role of ideology in criticizing and transcending the status quo. Osborne remains within the bounds of empirical reality and does not transcend it to the critical, which is the natural opposite of the dogmatic. Osborne's antagonism to ideology reflects a strong trend that grew and developed during the 1960s known as "de-ideologization." This is a tendency towards the abandonment of ideology through the absolutization of technology. This trend, which flourished in the mid-1960s in the West and was popular under the name of "The End of Ideology," is summed up in the key phrase of Herbert Marcuse's social critique, namely, the trend towards technological rationality :

> As a technological universe, advanced industrial society is a political universe, the latest stage in the rea-

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35. J. Osborne, "They Call It Cricket", p. 144.

> lization of a specific historical project — namely, the experience, transformation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of domination. As the project unfolds, it shapes the entire universe of discourse and action, intellectual and material culture. In the medium of technology, culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system. Technological rationality has become political rationality.(36)

Such view denies the existence of any contradiction between capitalism and socialism, as two economic systems with different modes of production, in terms of the advanced industrial society in which social differences are abolished under economic partnership. According to this trend, technology would abolish any contradiction in the realm of production, distribution and consumption. In his famous interview with Kenneth Tynan, Osborne corroborates this view :

TYNAN: Do you think the working class will ever be able to run the country ?

OSBORNE : Well, the working class isn't what it was when I got the hell out of it. The trouble is that history has

36. Herbert Marcuse, **One Dimensional Man** (Boston : Sphere Books, 1966), p. xvi.

> rather pulled the carpet out from under it. If anything takes over it will be technology.(37)

Osborne' other historical play, **A Subject of Scandal and Concern,** is a television play. The time for its performance on stage would be as that of a lengthy one-act play. The play deals with a moral attitude towards religious belief through the central character of George Holyoake, who was the last man to be convicted and imprisoned for blasphemy in Britain in 1842. Osborne's exploration of the nature of religious belief and men's moral and social responsibility towards religion through a historical subject in this play, is the closest he could get to the essence of Brecht's theatre, not only in technique but also in content. In content, Holyoake's secular interpretation of man's relation to God are an attempt to demythologize religion and to defetishize man's alienated belief in an abstract deity. The class content of his attitude is also obvious and it determines his moral position :

> Our national debt is a millstone around the poor man's neck, and our church and general religious institutions cost us about twenty million pounds annually. Worship is expensive, and so I appeal to

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37. Interview with K. Tynan, **The Observer Review,** (July 7, 1968).

> your heads and your pockets: are we not too por to have God? If poor men cost the state as much, they would be put, like officers, on half-pay. And while our present distress remains, it is wisest to do the same thing with Deity.(38)

Hence, it is more with the relation of man to man, rather than man to God, that Holyoake is interested and around which his moral attitude is centred. For him man's social alienation is caused by religious alienation and, in the spirit of Feuerbach though in a more concrete and socially conscious manner, he advocates the demythologization of God and the dissolution of the religious institutions for the benefit of the masses. For Holyoake, being honest to oneself and being honest to one's fellow men is the essence of being honest to God.

In technique, the historical distancing is effectively achieved by the introduction of the narrator, who at once establishes the historical relevance of the subject as well as its contemporaneity. The audience can, thus, establish the relation between Holyoake's cause and the contemporary attempts at secularizing religious belief, and the surprise aroused by this rapport sets the audience to question the validity of a supposedly secular society, and whether it could afford in reality to be equally honest to people

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38. John Osborne, **A Subject of Scandal and Concern** (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 16.

by spreading social justice. In other words, the contradictions brought out in the play between the nineteenth century Victorian religious morality and social injustice represented by persecution of thought, project into the contradictions of a twentieth century welfare society which — though it permits secular thought — denies secularization of society. In this sense, it appears that the heritage of British idealism and reformism have become another form of Victorian morality hindering freedom of thought as well as radical social change. Hence, they appear as modern reflections of old forms of secularism as opposed to secularization :

> Secularization implies a historical process, almost certainly irreversible, in which society and culture are delivered from tutelage to religious control and closed metaphysical world-views... Secularism, on the other hand, is the name for an ideology; a new closed world-view functions very much like a new religion... Like any other "ism," it menaces the openness and freedom secularization has produced.(39)

However, the play suffers from two major defects, a structural and a thematic defect, which alienate it from the true

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39. Harvey Cox, **The Secular City** (New York : Macmillan Company, 1965), pp. 20-21.

spirit of Brecht's epic theatre. The structural shortcomings are represented by the fact that the dramatic presentation of Holyoake's sense of isolation clash with the epic, narrative scenes of the narrator. The ambivalence between the documentary parts provided by the narrator and the more dramatic scenes, instead of creating a dramatic tension as they do in Brecht's plays (e.g. the tension created by the singer's comments on Grusha's story in **The Caucasian Chalk Circle),** results in a technical ambivalence. Though the narrator occasionally comments on the play's action, e.g. his comment on **Cheltenham Chronicle :** "The method's of newspaper morality have changed very little,"(40) his function is mainly to provide information and not to coordinate these information. That is, he functions as a device to solve the problem of exposition :

> Since his (the narrotor's) appearances are interruptive at the beginning of the play, the change-over to a consecutively "dramatic" presentation creates a certain dissonance : for the action, having been initiated self-consciously, tends to get caught up in itself as Holyoake's trial progresses. A pseudo-documentary play becomes a court-room-drama.(41)

The second issue concerning the thematic defficiency, has to do with the epilogue addressed by the narrator :

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40. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 18.
41. S. Trussler, **op. cit.,** pp. 89-90.

> This is a time when people demand from entertainments what they call a "solution." They expect to have their little solution rattling away down there in the middle of the play like a motto in a Christmas cracker... For these who seek information, it has been put before you. If it is meaning you are looking for, then you must start collecting for yourself. And what would you say is the moral then... If you are waiting for the commercial, it is probably this : you cannot live by bread alone. You must have jam — even if it is mixed with another man's blood.(42)

The last statement reduces a highly intellectual and moral subject to an entertainment play by equating the play's moral to a commercial. It is also self-contradictory, for whereas it implies the negation of any particular solution to the issue tackled in the play, it simultaneously offers a blatantly straightforward one. This ambivalent epilogue, unlike those of Brecht's, offers a closed and pessimistic world-view which conceives of alienation as a universally insoluble predicament incorporated in man's ontological being, instead of an open and dynamic view of the problem in the spirit of Brecht's epic structure. The structure of Osborne's play is likewise closed and circular.

Another major technical shortcoming in **A Subject of**

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42. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** pp. 46-47.

Scandal and Cocern is shown by the fact that Osborne tries to practice a shift of emphasis from central characters to a more objective concentration on a historical situation. Unlike **Luther,** where the situations are subordinated to the scrutiny of Luther's private sense of estrangement, Osborne tries to relate Holyoake's sense of lonelines and his confrontation of his self-imposed isolation to the situations of his blasphemy, his trial, conviction, imprisonment and ultimate release. He, therefore, concentrates on the trial scene which at times shows a deviation from the moral issue to juridical technicalities. However, in the public trial Holyoake asserts his own personal motives behind his blasphemy, and even refuses to employ a counsel to defend him. This and the fact that Osborne fails to give appropriate account of the concrete situations of the historical terms of the conflicts, show shat Osborne is at his weakest in constructing situations and at his best in constructing a play round a single character. The concrete situations are once more located in the character's response to the situation, his inner motives and convictions rather than in the situations themselves which seem to matter very little to Osborne. As Carter aptly comments on **A Subject of Scandal and Concern :** "Holyoake might have been another Luther, as it is, the script sacrifices the hero to the structure of the plot."(43) The dramatic effect of the absence of a balance between the situations and the character's response to the situa-

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43. A. Carter, **op. cit.,** p. 118.

tions, not to speak of a dialectical relation between the subject and the object, is neither empathy for Holyoake — which is hindered by insufficient involvement in his personal problem — nor detachment and critical thinking due to the absence of adequate presentation of objective conditions. The audience are left frustrated for, while Osborne points to the existence of persecution of thought, he completely abstains from giving the causes of that persecution nor does he offer any solution in consequence. Hence,

> ...Osborne fails sufficiently to engage our attention or to raise our indignation. It is almost as if Osborne is deliberately holding himself back from becoming too indignant in a case of bigotry and injustice. We find ourselves simultaneously applauding judicious restraint, but missing the passion and the feeling that had swept us a long with Osborne's earlier works.(44)

Self-alienation, coloured with what Carter calls "ambivalent nostalgia," is again the dominant theme of Osborne's play **The Entertainer.** In his note to the play, Osborne states emphatically:

> The music hall is dying, and, with it, a significant part of England. Some of the heart of England has

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44. M. Benham, **Osborne** (Ehinburgh : Oliver and Boyd, 1969), p. 51.

> gone; something that once belonged to everyone, for this was truly a folk art. In writing this play, I have not used some of the techniques of the music hall in order to exploit an effective trick, but because that these can solve some of the eternal problems of time and space that face the dramatist, and, also it has been relevant to the story and setting. Not only has this technique its own traditions, its own convention and symbol, its own mystique, it cuts right across the restrictions of the so-called naturalistic stage. Its contact is immediate, vital, and direct.(45)

Osborne's intention to revive a supposedly dying old national folk tradition on the contemporary stage, instead of attempting to find a radically new form to suit twentieth century theatre, is expressive of his sense of nostalgia. The music hall, being a popular art of entertainment is diametrically opposed to the content and form of the naturalistic drama. In using a popularly oriented technique, the dramatist should hope to convey a collective problem that works on more than one level, or at least, to relate an individual problem (which is the case in the naturalistic drama) to a wider, more public social cause. In short, to make a private story into a popular one, and by popular is

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45. John Osborne, **The Entertainer** (London: Faber and Faber, 1974).

meant the quality of appealing to the masses in their everyday life, that is, in the Brechtian sense. The technique of **The Entertainer** may be attributed to an English folk tradition more than to a direct or conscious Brechtian influence, the attempt to popularize the contemporary stage by using a folk tradition — though it is not innovated i.e. radically altered — but is rather renovated, that is, using an old form for a new content. Despite that it bears some similarity to the spirit of Brecht's theatre (particularly **Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti, The Good Person of Setzuan, The Caucasian Chalk Circle).** However, this can only be determined after discussing whether Osborne, in **The Entertainer,** could actually overcome the limitations of the naturalistic theatre and break away from the boundaries of an individual, psychological problem to project it into a wider social context. If the play proves to succeed in achieving a social dimension, then Osborne would have succeeded in reaching the core of Brechtian technique and not just the frame.

The play is constructed in the form of "Numbers" in a music hall, a "Revue" or a "Variety show." Act 1 consists of five Numbers; act 2 has three Numbers, and act 3 five Numbers. The Numbers alternate between the scenes with the Rice family and those of Archie's actual show in which his songs are a comment on the preceding scene as well as on his own and his country's decay. The Archie Numbers, which are sandwiched between the family scenes and which Osborne uses as a breaking away from the naturalistic tradition, contrast with the family

scenes by identifying Archie's personal sense of self-alienation, both professionally and humanly, with the national crisis of the loss of the empire. The damaged psyche of Archie is paralleled by the damaged state of his country. In both cases the crisis is a private one, for it is personal (Archie's) and national (Britain's). In the family scenes, we are again introduced to the private problems and fears of the individual members of the family. Each one seems to suffer from alienation in some way : Phoebe is a neurotic middle-aged woman who is continually bored and cut off from a real communication with either her husband or any one in the family. She spends her time trying to compensate for her loneliness by going to the cinema or by drinking gin, neither of which satisfy her lack of love or quieten her fears of dying alone :

> I don't want to always have to work. I mean you want a bit of life before it's all over. It takes all the gilt off if you know you've got to go on and till they carry you out in a box... I don't want to end up being laid out by some stranger in some rottten stinking little street in Gateshead or West Hartlepool or those dead-or-alive holes.(46)

Jean's alienation is symptomatic of her generation's loss of identity

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46. J. Osborne, **op. cit.**, p. 40.

and purpose, for which she tries to compensate by indulging in immature and shallow political protest as a means of defying the meaninglessness of existence and of asserting her individuality. Though she objects to her fiance's repressive authority and credits her brother Frank for refusing to serve in the army, which reveal a positive stand, she expresses her despair and sense of defeat in the face of reality in the light of which her actions appear to be, like those of Phoebe, an escape from reality :

> Here we are, we're alone in the universe, there's no God, it just seems that it all began by something as simple as sunlight striking on a piece of rock. And here we are. We've only got ourselves. Somehow, we've just got to make a go of it. We've only ourselves.(47)

Billy is alienated from his Edwardian England, the golden days of the British Empire, as well as those of the art of the music hall. Both having slipped away from him, he either isolates himself in his room or bores everyone by his memories of the good old days, however reconciled he may seem to the passing of his era :

> I feel sorry for you people. You don't know what it's really like. You haven't lived, most of you. You've

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47. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 85.

> never known what it was like, you're all miserable really. You don't know what life can be like.(48)

Or again :

> We all had our own style, our own songs — and we were all English. What's more, we spoke English. It was different. We all knew what the rules were. and even if we spent half our time making people laugh at'em we never seriously suggested that anyone should break them.(49)

Osborne's description of Billy shows his great reverence for the period which the character is supposed to represent. It also proves that Osborne does not present Billy as an anachronism but as a living example of the past and lost identity of glorious Britain. Billy's nostalgia is indeed a parallel of Osborne's own.

Frank, the least successful family member, escapes from his failure by searching for "number one," which is again nothing but the lost glory of imperial Britain, to which Archie's song "We're all out for good old Number One" is devoted :

> We're all out for good old Number One
> Number One's the only one for me.

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48. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 23.
49. **Ibid.,** p. 81.

Good old England, you're my cup of tea,
But I don't want no drab equality.(50)

Archie is the main character who overshadows and patronizes overyone in the family. However, this attitude and his affected apathy are only another protective mechanism from his deep sense of failure besides his uninteresting songs and unfunny jokes. His song : "Why should I care ?" becomes meaningful in his pseudo-monologue to Jean :

> You see this face, you see this face, this face can split open with warmth and humanity. It can sing, and tell the worst, unfunniest stories in the world to a great mob of dead, drab erks and it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because — look at my eyes. I'm dead behind these eyes. I'm dead, just like the whole inert, shoddy lot out there. It doesn't matter because I don't feel a thing, and neither do they. We're just as dead as each other.(51)

Archie's affected apathy is shattered when he voices his deep desire to sing in the manner of the negress whom he heard singing in the bar :

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50. J. Osborne, **op. cit., p. 32.**
51. **Ibid.,** p. 72.

> I wish to God I could, I wish to God I could feel like that old black bitch with her fat cheeks, and sing. If I'd done one thing as good as that in my whole life, I'd have been all right.(52)

Archie's strip-show "Rock'n Roll New'd Look" is a vulgarization and a cheap commercialization of the folk art of music hall. Trying to revive a dead art and to compete with the commercial entertainment, Archie, unlike his father, lacks the ability to be popular or the folk quality that is the core of music hall. Due to that defect, Archie fails to establish a reationship between himself and the audience whom he loathes. By his insulting humour, he hopes to get the audience's response, but all he gets in an unresponsive, uninterested audience.

We start examining the play's technique by raising the questions asked by Trussler :

> How... do the domestic scenes stand up **functionally** to being mounted, turn-numbers and all, as run-of-the-mill music-hall sketches ? And in what ways do the intervening "turns" counterpoint the sketches ? Are they purposefully related to them — or are the styles no more that arbitrarily dissonant ?(53)

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52. J. Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 71.
53. S. Trussler, **op. cit.,** p. 58.

The intention behind imposing a music-hall style on the naturalistic family scenes is to solve a stylistic problem of the naturalistic stage and to establish an immediate contact with the audience. However, as it is realized in the play, the srtucture fails to achieve that end because the numbers sung by Archie remain entirely dissociated from the family numbers which, though naturalistic in content and form, are also entitled as numbers. The numbers, however, "while working... in the distanced music-hall setting... fail to connect with the family episodes : they give local colour to Archie's career, but never relate his own failure to the national decadence they parody and proclaim."(54) Moreover, the numbers do not establish any direct relationship with the audience because they are enclosed within Archie's own private world. The fact that the music hall is dying and with it the way of life which it embodied, is a curiously personal obsession on Archie's and his creator's parts. It only calls for the audience's sympathy, or to be more precise, empathy, for the fallen Archie.

For all its alternation between the private neuroses of the Rice family on the one hand, and Archie's private dilemma which he persistently identifies with the national question on the other, the technique of **The Entertainer** has been wrongly identified as a Brechtian one. In spite of Osborne's emphatic note about his deliberate use of music hall technique, Carter writes :

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54. S. Trussler, **op. cit.,** p. 64.

> Further interest was stimulated by the fact that Osborne has adopted some form of Brechtian frame-for the play. The realistic "family" scenes were encased in the epic framework of Archie's music-hall turns. Like Brecht, Osborne generalised his smaller parts, concentrating on the central figure of Archie. Yet it should be incorrect to think of **The Entertainer** as a "Brechtian" play, for Brecht was trying to encourage detached thinking by his alienation structure, whilst Osborne was probably seeking deeper emotional involvement.(55)

Carter's reservation about the different objective in **The Entertainer,** though it is of basic importance, is not the only element that separates the play's technique from that of Brecht's epic theatre. Osborne's concentration on the single character of Archie is mistakenly identified by Carter as a Brechtian characteristic. Though the titles of some of Brecht's plays may include names of characters, and though one of his great plays deals with a historical figure (Galileo), it has never been Brecht's intention to "generalise his smaller parts (by) concentrating on the contral figure,"(50) but rahther the opposite. For Brecht deals with gene-

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55. Carter, **op. cit.,** pp. 32-33.
56. **Ibid.,** p. 33.

ral, abstract issues through particular, concrete problems of individual characters in particular situations. Whereas Osborne, once more in **The Entertainer,** reverses the Brechtian scheme by moving away from the core (i.e. the general) to the frame (the individual), turning, thus, a general cause into a particular one. In **The Entertainer** the private cause has two levels : the personal and the national. Hence, Carter's comment on the double-level of the play : "The existence of these various levels of meaning is emphasised by the Brechtian structure of the play,"(57) reveals it as pseudo-Brechtian, if not non-Brechtian. For the play's action, as Carter in his self-contradictory statement indicates, remains enclosed within the private, inner problems of the family which are further engulfed by those of Archie's. We are shown the characters' agonizing response to a decadent situation and are completely denied even a glimpse into the concrete nature of the situation. Thus, Benham offers a more relevant remark :

> As a symbol of national decadence the play does not succeed, mainly because the powerful creation of Archie Rice throws its balance and turns the play into a solo performance... and as a result too many questions are left unanswered, and too many ills hinted at but left unstated and unexplored... such to-

57. A. Carter, **op. cit.,** p. 34.

> tal panorama remains an intriguing but unfulfilled prospect.(38)

Osborne's recurring obsession with the theme of personal isolation and with extraordinary psychological neurotics as protagonists, make the effect of the technique of **The Entertainer** a very private, emotional one. It appeals to the emotions of a particular audience, those who share Osborne's nostalgia for the lost empire and existential despair. Hence, the play fails to have a popular appeal by working on the consciousness of the masses. The folk music hall, which is still a popular working-class art form, has been turned into a very private play for an elite audience. Needless to say that the Brechtian dramatic effect of a detached critical thinking is absolutely absent from Osborne's play.

One of the important factors that determines Osborne's choice and treatment of themes and characters, is Existentialism. Osborne's emphasis on feeling makes him more responsive to Existentialism as a contemporary trend in Western thought rather than to Marxism. Existentialist interpretation of alienation as an uneliminable concomitant of human existence, finds its echo in Osborne's sense of nostalgia. His look-back-in-anger attitude, which is wrongly attributed to a rejectionist and radical stance against the British Establishment, is rather essentially a sign of nostalgia :

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58. M. Benham, **op. cit.,** p. 36.

> ...the "long days in the sun" of Edwardian England, so vividly conjured up by Jimmy Porter in **Look Back in Anger,** were fraught with fears of industrial unrest, and even of revolution. But in retrospect the period did acquire a golden glow, especially for those, like Osborne, who felt that they lacked roots — even of commitment to a particular class. This yearning for an unquestioning morality can induce a sense of alienation from one's own age... Jimmy's wish to be a vicariously dignified labourer is also a symptom of the gnawing sentimentality to which he ironically confesses. He looks back in anger only because he looks back in nostalgia : and his compulsive verbosity is a protective device, an armoury of words with which an easily-wounded man defends himself against those who best recognize his vulnerability. Thus, society matters only in so far as its past is coloured by Jimmy's rose-tinted vision, and as its present is made the punctured targest of his invective.(59)

The same can be said almost ad verbatum about Osborne, whose plays are full of invective language and sentiments which are "the verbal medium for nostalgia."(60) Osborne's absorption in

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59. S. Trussler, **John Osborne, ed. cit.,** pp. 1-2.
60. S. Trussler, **The Plays of John Osborne, ed.** cit., p. 69.

the past, as it is dramatized through his characters, reveals his compulsive fear of the future. His nostalgia and fear of a future that will eternally wipe out the image of his favourite England are admitted in his interview with K. Tynan :

> I come out of a generation that grew up during the war, and that is what one is... I'm a patriot in the sense that my life only has meaning here, not somewhere else. This sort of current spurious internationalism, where people respond to one another across nations and continents, it seems to me very unreal. I don't know whether my focus is getting smaller or my England is getting smaller, but if it is I don't make apologies. I think it's more real, and more human.

TYNAN : Does it worry you when people attack England as a third-rate Power with outdated pretensions ?

OSBORNE : Oh yes. I, like Dr. Johnson, I think one prejudice is worth 20 principles, and I hate the... Germans and I always will and I believe most people of my generation always will. Of course, I wouldn't claim that this was entirely rational.(61)

Here Osborne's nostalgia and bitter feeling for not being born in the golden days of Imperial Britain are quite clear, and so

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61. Interview with Tynan, **op. cit.**

is his strong nationalist feeling. Osborne's first dramatization of his "highly individual and probably incurable estrangement"(62) in **Look Back in Anger,** marks a very critical historical stage in the history of modern Britain.

If the British classical left in the thirties was concerned with political issues like the Russian revolution and the Spanish Civil War, the "New Left" in the fifties was deeply provoked by the crises over Suez and Hungary. Summing up the distinctions between the classical left and the "New Left", Arnold writes :

> Socially this division between the "old" and the "new" Left — apart from the inevitable hiatus produced by the war, and the obvious difference between the political line-up of the 1930s and the 1960s — appears to reflect the cleavage between dissident 'Establishment' intellectuals and the new post-war intelligentsia which has come up by way of scholarship and lacks some of the social graces (as well the characteristic snobberies) of its predecessors.(63)

The post-war intelligentsia, of largely working-class and lower

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62. S. Trussler, **John Osborne, ed. cit.,** p. 9.
63. G.L. Arnold, "Britain : The New Reasoners," **Revisionism,** ed. Leopold Labedz (London : George Allen and Nnwin, 1962), p. 302.

midle-class background, differed from the aristocratic, bourgeois left-wing Oxford and Cambridge groups of the thirties to which Auden and Isherwood belonged. They were writing and living under different conditions, and their response to the new conditions was largely determined by the spirit of the age :

> It has thus been the **middle** generation, neither old enough to cling to the certainties of an imperial past nor young enough to retain such hope for their futures, from whose ranks the "exceptional" heroes have generally been recruited. And it has been the upper and the lower classes who have filled in a sufficiently "interesting" background — so that the bourgeoisie have come in for the severest treatment, both at Osborne's hands and from the mouths of his central characters.(64)

In this sense also, Osborne differs from Brecht. Brecht lived under fascism and Hitlerism, and all his works without exception were directed towards one object, namely, to fight and defeat fascism. Osborne belongel to another generation, post-war, which had different problems. However, because Osborne has had different experiences of the world, his vision of the world should have modified that of Brecht's, and this modification should

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64. S. Trussler, **The Plays of John Osborne, ed. cit.,** p. 220.

have led to the development and enrichment of the Brechtian tradition. However, although Osborne's theatre could be considered a modification of Brecht's vision, because he lived after Brecht and experienced things the German writer did not, one should add that this modification is of a negative nature.

It appears from our analysis of Osborne's play in relation to Brecht's theatre that Osborne's interpretation of alienation and his use of Brecht's alienation technique as a frame-work for his different, non-Brechtian ends, proved to be a regressive step in the Brechtian tradition both in content and form. In this sense, Osborne's theatre shares many characteristics with that of Auden's : the psychonanalytic interpretation of history, the idealistic interpretation of alienation and the non-dialectical formulation and presentation of the problem, the absence of a futuristic vision, individualism and opposition to revolutionary change. Due to the absence of the class content in the treatment of alienation, Osborne's theatre cannot be regarded an extension of the Brechtian tradition which has its roots in the concept of alienation within a class society as a pivotal idea round which all the plays revolve. Hence, Osborne's use of the epic technique is a formalistic, decorative frame-work removed from the philosophical, social and political core of Brecht's theatre.

We may deduce from our analysis of Osborne's plays that they represent only the inessential feature of Brecht's theatre, namely, the technique extricated from the content. Because the

pivotal idea in Osborne's plays is qualitatively different from that in Brecht's, the treatment also differs. Hence when Osborne resorts to Brechtian technique, he uses it as a mere device to serve his individualistic treatment of the theme of the individual's loneliness in an establishment-oriented society, which is far removed from Brecht's socio-political treatment of the theme of man's alienation. This means that Osborne borrows from Brecht certain devices and uses them for purposes that are extrinsic to the content of Brecht's theatre and opposed to its social function. Therefore, Osborne's few experimentations with Brechtian technique resulted in the alienation of Brechtian content and form resulting, thus, in the fixation of man's alienation. This, in turn, should be seen as a deliberate reversal of the revolutionary content of Brecht's theatre, namely, man's liberation from alienation.

CHAPTER III

BRECHTIAN ASPECTS IN JOHN ARDEN'S PLAYS

The development of Arden's dramatic career has notably undergone three stages during which his evolution, both as man and artist, manifests itself in the thematic and technical treatments of his plays. For the sake of convenience, we will divide the stages according to the chronology of the plays' performances: 1957-1960 before his intensive collaboration with his wife Margaretta D'Arcy; 1960-1972 plays written in collaboration with D'Arcy; 1972-after the authors' visit to India. During the first stage, Arden wrote plays for the professional theatre : the Royal Court Company, where he started as a professional dramatist and other companies. These early plays are marked by a thematic unity, and they include : **The Waters of Babylon** (1957), **Live Like Pigs** (1958), **Serjeant Musgrave's Dance** (1959), **The Happy Haven** (1960), and **The Workhouse Donkey** (1963). In the second stage the thematic unity is disrupted by Arden's growing social awareness in the plays written with D'Arcy and the movement outside the professional theatre to experimentation with community drama. The plays include : **The Business of Good Government** (1960); **Ars Longa Vita Brevis** (1964); **The Royal Pardon** (1966); **Friday's Hiding** (1966); **The Hero Rises Up** (1968), and **The Island of the Mighty** (1972). In these plays, with the help of D'Arcy, Arden's social perspective has widened and become

more concrete. Hence, although the same technique used in the early plays is employed, it acquires a new function to servce the new outlook. The third stage, that is from 1972 until the present time, is marked by a decisive shift outside the established theatre to the fringe and a professed commitment to the theme of Ireland, for which the two major plays: **The Ballygombeen Bequest** (1972) and **The Non-Stop Connolly Show** (1977) are devoted and specially referred to as the Irish plays.

From the beginning of his career, Arden has been quite distinct from the rest of his generation of dramatists. This specifity is located in the originality of his technique. S. Trussler writes :

> Closely identified though John Arden has become with the other young British playwrights who began writing in the late 1950s, his dramatic career has taken an entirely individual... direction. The controlled originality of his technique was the more remarkable at a time when John Osborne and Arnold Wesker, for all their uncompromising innovations in subject-matter, were still writing within conventional formal molds : and the unequivocal left-wing commitment of such writers contrasted strongly with the scrupulous balance of argumentative power in Arden's plays.(1)

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1. Simon Trussler, **John Arden** (New York : Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 3.

This "scrupulous balance of argumentative power," sustained by the technique, revealed Arden's early liberal attitude towards the exposition of social contradictions. The emphasis in these plays is on the exposition of the individuals' responses to the repressive authority of society and the establishment of law and order which work against man's potential freedom and need for self-realization. In the early plays, we observe the effects of the social mechanism on the individuals through the characters' reaction to particular situations. The originality of these plays can be attributed to their technique which shows Arden's conscious attempt to revitalize the theatre and popularize it by using English traditional popular art forms. Being deeply versed in the English literary tradition, and possessing an expert knowledge of the stage history, he draws upon the rich resources of the English tradition of literary and non-literary popular art forms. Examples of some early plays will reveal this thematic and technical feature of Arden's plays.

The Waters of Babylon deals with a Polish emigre, Krank, who leads a double life and has a split personality : he is both a respectable assistant architect in the day-time, and a manager of a brothel by night. This could be interpreted as a sign of alienation, since Krank is actually exiled from his country, physically alienated from his environment, and becomes at the same time an exploiter by running the brothel. Having been exploited in the past, he turns to exploiting other people. The play follows a simple plot line. However, the simplicity of the plot implies

many intricate episodes, loosely tied together. These intricacies are revealed in the play's narrative style and the implementation of the music-hall technique to produce a sense of detachment and a critical attitude towards the incidents and the characters on the part of the audience. The episodic and narrative syle, and Krank's direct address to the audience, are used to detach the audience from the play's plot and characters by constantly reminding them that they are in a theatre watching a play, that is, in the manner of the Brechtian alienation effects. The effect of the stylized narrative and the accurate information conveyed by the narrator is to shatter the illusion of the stage and establish a direct contact with the audience. Albert Hunt attributes this style to the English traditional forms :

> This intricate narrative is very precisely put together. But alongside this precision, the play has another structure, which gives the impression of being loose and episodic. It's a pantomime sructure — even the set is that of a traditional pantomime, with curtains that draw to allow scene changes, in front of which linking scenes can be played — which takes the form of a series of music-hall turns...(2)

Although Hunt sees a contact between Arden's use of the tra-

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2. Albert Hunt, **Arden : a study of his plays** (London : Eyre Methuen, 1974), p. 38.

ditional pantomime and the music hall and Brecht's alienation technique, he considers this contact only as a parallel rather than a sign of a conscious impact of Brecht's technique. If Arden uses these old popular forms for the same ends intended by Brecht, namely, to produce a new and contemporary version that incorporates the spirit of the twentieth century and is popular, the connection between Arden and Brecht becomes more than just a parallel and can be considered a direct influence. However, this remains to be investigated through the analysis of other plays.

In **Live Like Pigs,** Arden represents the repressive and unjust conditions which engender social violence in the violent reactions of two families to each other, the Sawneys, the family of gypsies, and the Jacksons, the respectable law-abiding family. The conflicting attitudes of both families bring them into an open and violent clash. The apparently naturalistic strutcure of character and situation presentation is counterbalanced by the "poetic structure," which is explained by Arden :

> I intended it to be not so much a social document as a study of differing ways of life brought sharply into conflict and both losing their own particular virtues under the stress of intolerance and misunderstanding. In other words, I was more concerned with the "poetic" than the "journalistic" structure of the play.(3)

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3. Introductory note to **Live Like Pigs** (London : Penguin, 1967).

This "poetic structure" is realized by the use of episodic music-hall sketches, ballads sung by a singer who introduces each scene Hence, the episodic structure is made to reflect the social situation, or as Hunt puts it : "The anarchy of music-hall is linked directly with the anarchy of a social situation."(4) The contradictions presented between the Sawneys and the Jacksons is a reflection of social conditions which induce conflict and violence and ultimately destroy people. Both families are destroyed by the contradictions : the Sawneys are arrested and the Jacksons' repectable life is exposed.

Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, Arden's now most popularly successful and famous play, investigates the destructive impact of colonial war through Musgrave's pacifist tendencies which clash with the reality of a violent and war-oriented social system. Arden's most pacifist play was instigated by the political and military troubles in Cyprus at the time he wrote he play :

> One of he things that set the play off was an incident in Cyprus. A soldier's wife was shot in the street by terrorists, and according to the newspaper reports... some soldiers ran wild at night and people were killed in the rounding-up. The atrocity which sparks off Musgrave's revolt... is roughly similar.(5)

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4. A. Hunt, **op. cit.,** p. 50.
5. John Arden, "Building the Play," **Encore,** July-August 1961, p. 31.

Arden's reaction to a contemporary issue made him write the play in a nineteenth century background in order to dislocate the temporality and locality and to comment on a universal problem, that is, to establish a connection between the colonial wars of England in the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth as an extension of this tradition of war. Musgrave's reaction to the situation is described by Arden nineteen years later :

> (Musgrave) was an old soldier who, sickened of the oppressive role of the Army in the colonies, deserts, and attempts to strike a blow against his masters : by his inability to understand the political implications of the labour movement he fails, and is executed.(6)

Musgrave's abstract idea about peace makes him resort to violence. In his rebellion against law and order he imposes them: "Good order and the discipline : it's the only road I know."(7) Musgrave's idealistic rebellion against the authority of the army is a politically unconscious reaction to which he is driven by his romantic sense of peace and justice. Although Musgrave's attitude is indirectly criticized by being continually phy-

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6. John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy, **To Present the Pretence** (London : Methuen, 1978), p.
7. John Arden, **Plays : One** (London : Methuen, 1977), p. 108.

sically and morally juxtaposed to the crooked Bargie, his honesty and chivalry are asserted and so is his failure, but no alternative is offered. Hence, the play ends with a song that has the romantic force of a folk ballad. Arden, again, employs the same technique of the traditional popular forms used in earlier plays. The whole play, in fact, is a folk story that comments on a contemporary issue in a simple and primitive spirit similar to that of the folk ballad.

Paul W. Day comments on the social content of these three early plays :

> ...Arden's characters roughly sort themselves out into acceptors and non-acceptors of the current social situation. But I think the milling crowd of characters in these three plays can be classified more exactly into the two classes of, first, characters who have been or are in process of being captured by the social order, who operate in accordance with its demands; and second, characters who feel themselves free from the social order and its demands... Behind these three diverse plays, then, it is possible to see Arden's continuing concern with the theme of the relation between the vital and life-giving individual impulses, and the repressive powers which the collective reason of society is forced to invoke in order to control those impulses. Such control is always difficult and sometimes dangerous, the danger lying

> in the possibility that the citizen will cease to respond spontaneously and thoughtfully to the quality of life which society offers him : and in the possibility, too, that the demons of abstract thought will possess men instead of the benign forces of life and love.(8)

The second stage of Arden's dramatic career reveals a social content that is more oriented towards particular concrete social and political situations and their impact on the community, rather than individual and abstract moral and human values. While writing for the professional theatre, Arden attempted some experiments outside the limits of the professional theatre when he and D'Arcy engaged in writing and directing some community plays. The first of these was **The Business of Good Government,** presented as a Christmas play at the Church of St. Michael, Brent Knoll, Somerset. It is a simple nativity play which tells the story of Christ's birth and the holy family, a Christmas entertainment for childen — but not only children — in wich the local inhabitants of Brent Knoll played. Being a play designed for a specific community, it involved a technical and a thematic problem. The technical issue of having non-professionals acting was part of the experiment, for the idea

8. Paul W. Day, "Individual and Society in the Early Plays of John Arden," **Modern Drama,** Vol. XVIII, No. 3, September 1975, pp. 243-249.

was to get the local people involved in the experiment. This problem was solved gradually and even produced positive results, which are reported by Arden :

> On assembling a cast, we found that the majority had never acted, and indeed had only turned up at all under pressure from the Vicar — who had apparently reassured one or two doubtful volunteers by promising that they would not be expected to **act,** merely speak the lines as though reading the Lesson. It was therefore essential that they should not be frightened away by the thought of having to 'build a character' in the Stanislavski sense — we concentrated instead on bringing out the meaning of their lines until, without entirely realizing it, they created from their own personalities a character, completely natural, belonging both to their own experience and to the world of the play. As rehearsals progressed I found that my lines were undergoing a number of changes — the actors' normal habits of speech reasserted themselves wherever the writing had fallen into awkwardness and pretentious phraseology, and a kind of gentle erosion of these difficult places produced in the end a simpler and stronger text than that with which we had begun.(9)

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9. John Arden and M. D'Arcy, Preface to **The Business of Good Government** (London : Methuen, 1975).

This experiment is a successful implementation of Brecht's concept of the Lehrstück which is based on having non-professionals — mainly schoolchilden, workers, office clerks — to perform the text, during the process of which they could learn from the text as much as add to it from their own experience, thus, producting themselves and their own social relations in the play. In this sense. **The Business of Good Government** could be regarded, to some extent, a model of a Brechtian Lehrstück.

The thematic issue involved in the play's direction, was to make the content as relevant as possible to the environment and the local social situation, that is, to make it bear on the social life of the community. The moral of the play is, as Glenda Leeming puts it, "the business of good government allows for no miracles, but demands the kind of inhuman logic that treats human beings as objects."(10) In order to bring out that moral, the authors have projected into the nativity play contemporary economic and political issues. Hence, they use the mythical elements contained in a medieval mystery play and dislocate them, that is, present them in the context of concrete presentday situations to make them look strange and familiar at the same time. Herod, who appears in the medieval mystery play as the demon king, is presented "as an intelligent politician trying to make the best of an impossible situation."(11) He

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10. Glenda Leeming, **John Arden** (London : Longman, 1974), p. 9.
11. A. Hunt, **op. cit.,** p. 112.

does so through his comments on the situation by which he invokes the audience's sense of critical judgement. Thus, when the play starts with the Angel announcing : "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. Glory to God, in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men,"(12) Herod's comments on the last line are : "Goodwill, great joy, peace upon earth — I do not believe they are altogether possible. But it is the business of good government to try and make them possible."(13) Herod's critical remark alienates the context of the Angel's rhetorical announcement, that is, it brings it down to earth, from a context of heavenly commandment to a mundane actuality of the impossibility of the realization of these commandments. With the introduction of politics, the business of good government, the traditional myth is seen through the perspective of daily politics and its impact on people's everyday life. By doing so, the authors apply a technique used in religious drama for a secular purpose. The function of this secular purpose is to raise the consciousness of the audience to the economic and political factors that shape their lives. This overt socio-political function through the use of traditional forms, popularizes the theatre and makes it a means of education for the masses. In this sense, the play can be considered Brechtian. Yet the play lacks one of the vital

12. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 18.
13. **Ibid.**

elements of Brecht's epic technique, which is the secularization of the mythical contents of old popular forms. Arden admits that this was not one of the play's intentions : "The play is 'realist', in that the characters stand for themselves... and are not intended to carry symbolical or psychological overtones. But it is also 'non-realist' in that the principal action is miraculous and accepted as such."(14) Here the treatment of the relation between the "realist" and "non-realist" elements, unlike Brecht's, is undialectical for the two opposing elements are made only to juxtapose with each other instead of contradicting and clashing with one another. Whereas in **The Good Person of Setzuan** the mythical elements of the parable intermingle with realistic incidents of the play (the gods are investers and local judges), in **The Business of Good Government** they remain two seperate, equally valid and non-contradictory phenomena of everyday life. This is because the principle on which the authors have constructed the opposition of the realistic and the non-realistic elements is a formal and not a dialectical one, which excludes the contradiction and approves only of non-contradiction. Hence, the mythical element remains incorporated in the secular daily affairs in the play, and consequently in the audience's consciousness as a result of watching the play, and is not demythologized. The result of the fixation

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14. Arden and D'Arcy, "Preface and Production Notes," **op. cit.**

of the false consciousness incarnated in the contents of the myth is a fixation of the false ideology of the present conditions. The irrational nature of the mythical, non-realistic elements is contained in the language of the folk poetry of the play :

> Go to sleep, little baby, and then you will see
> How strong grows the acorn on the branches of the tree.
> How tightly it lives in the green and the brown
> But the strong storms of autumn will soon shake it down.
> The deeper it falls then the stronger will it tower
> Bold roots and wide limbs and a true heart of power.(15)

Here the language conforms, to some extent, to what Brecht demanded from a new popuplar play : the language is primitive, but not naive, near to reality by touching upon daily politics, poetic yet at the same time romantic, and this is where the language departs rom Brecht's norms of a popular play. The romantic element of the poetry — though it has the force of the traditional folk poetry — is cut off from contemporary popular poetry, for it lacks enough rational elements. The

15. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 52.

emotional outbalances the rational and, hence, the myth is preserved. The effect o nthe audience's critical observation is undermined by the preservation of the mythical element incorporated in the romantic language of the poetry. Therefore, Hunt's comment : "The two elements, the 'miraculous' and the 'realistic,' have been synthesized. The Ardens don't comment on either. They place them side by side and allow them to illuminate each other,"(26) is not exact. For a synthesis is not the outcome of placing two elements side by side (i.e. juxtaposing them) but of the contradiction between the elements contained in the unity and struggle of opposites, which the play does not present, and the negation of the contradition produces the new synthesis.

The Hero Rises Up, also intended as a community play, is an attempt on the part of the authors to present in dramatic and theatrical terms their idea about the symmetrical rectilinear and the asymmetrical curvilinear temperament and the contradiction between both.

> This play is about a man who was, by accident of birth and rearing, committed to a career governed by the old Roman 'rectilinear' principles. He himself was of asymmetrical 'curvilinear' temperament

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16. A. Hunt, **op. cit.,** p. 114.

to an unusually passionate degree. But the English soon discovered how to handle him. He was **done properly** : wasted his extraordinary energy, courage and humanity upon having men killed (in the end himself killed) : and then finally was installed as a National Monument. We meant to write a play which need not be **done properly.**(17)

For that purpose the authors call their play "a romantic melodrama," a play that appeals to the audience's senses by song, dance, visual images in order to release the audience's natural response that is usually suppressed by plays that are done properly i.e. with decorum. The asymmetrical curvilinear temperament is reflected in the play's structure. The symmetry of all the elements is disrupted and decentred. The play which is presumably about a national hero, is both a celebration and a questioning of the nature of national heroism. This is achieved through Nisbet, Nelson's stepson, who is both a character in the action and a commentator on it. The disenchanted, alienated Nisbet is presented as a dissident who offers an alternative view to the heroic one accorded to his stepfather and, thus, allows the audience to see Nelson's heroism within a new and different perspective. Nisbet's dissent is announced on a placard which accompanies his first appearance and reads : "CAPTAIN

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17. Preface to **The Hero Rises Up** (London : Methuen, 1969).

NISBET'S DISSENT." His dissent to Nelson's military career is paralleled by his objection to his private life and his affair with Emma Hamilton. Nisbet sings two anti-heroic songs which bring into focus the real social and political implications of Nelson's victories :

> A little island in our island home
> Is made of stone : they call it Newgate Gaol.
> We have a floating island made of wood :
> The fleet that won the Battle of the Nile.
>
> If you don't like the one, then try the other :
> The King and Parliament have made quite sure
> That angry ragged men have no third choice—
> We're on an island and we are at war.
>
> The noble Governor of Newgate Gaol
> Is not acclaimed by thousands in the street :
> But when the Victor of the Nile comes home
> Red roses bloom beneath his sacred feet.(18)

The image of Nelson's fleet as a floating gaol is a reminder of the antagonistic and repressive nature of British colonialism, which reduces the heroic figure of Nelson to an oppressive

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18. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 38.

blood-thirsty agent of a war-oriented system. The other song is anti-war and describes the effects of war on the poor masses of the two warring countries :

> The bare-arsed hordes of hungry Frenchmen
> Stand exactly as they were :
> The Kings of Europe have not destroyed them,
> The Poor of Europe are just as poor.
>
> The crowned kings of Royal Europe
> Still sit on their thrones :
> The furious French have not destroyed them,
> The furious French have a King of their own.(19)

Nisbet's bitter and ironic criticism of Nelson's life and career alienates the audience from his traditional heroism and sets them to question it. Hence, Hunt claims that the style of **The Hero Rises Up** is "the most Brechtian and anti-illustionistic that the Ardens have developed."(20)

> But the greatness of the play lies in the fact that as well as 'placing' and scrutinizing Nelson, they communicate to us all his charm, his bravery, his pas-

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19. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 53.
20. A. Hunt, **op. cit.,** p. 137.

> seion, and above all his audacious disregard for authority and convention — all those qualities that made him the hero, not simply of the mob and the court, but of the seamen for whose deaths he was responsible. The Ardens don't satirize Nelson, or cut him down to ordinariness. They make him a genuine hero to be celebrated — and at the same time ask us if heroes like this are what we need.(21)

This concern to present both sides of the issue with equal baiance, is manifested by the auhtors' carefully, equally balanced presentation of views and attitudes, which is mistakenly identified by Hunt and other critics as a dialectical view, alienates the play's style from that of Brecht's which shows a professed commitment to one side of the dialectics. Whereas the play's non-committed stance and the fact that the satirical comments come from Nisbet, who is not totally impartial, make it difficult for the audience to side with either view. Glenda Leeming makes an adequate remark about this point :

> At intervals John Arden has been compared with Bertolt Brecht. Both playwrights realize their dramatic conflicts in terms of social situations and pressures, rather than in emotional or spiritual de-

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21. G. Leeming, **op. cit.,** p. 7.

> velopments. But where Brecht sets forth the moral, the 'message' of the play, however controversial, contradictory or infuriating that moral may seem, Arden's even-handed exposition of motives leaves his audience without even a disputable guideline. By understanding the villains we are tempted to excuse them — they don't seem to be villains after all — and from this derives the difficulty and at the same time interest of Arden's work.(22)

Another important element of the structure is the transition from prose to verse which has an alienating effect by moving the play's temporality from the past into the present. It, thus, establishes a direct contact between both times, which encourages the audience to compare the two and criticize them. Hence, Emma's words about the Battle of Trafalgar place the event in its right historical perspective and comment critically on its historical significance :

> It's into them he will thrust his courage
> Till they toss their limbs and squeal—
> Oh sure he is worth his freestone pillar
> At the north end of Whitehall—
>
> Four huge lions made of bronze and a great wide open square of nothing. That's for me : nothing.(23)

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22. G. Leeming, **op. cit.,** p. 7.
23. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 82.

The early two phases of Arden's development show a shift from detachment and pacifism to a growing social awareness with the help of D'Arcy. The second stage, however, remains within the bounds of commitment to both sides of the question with equal balance. This limits their attitude to the level of reaction that lacks an alternative futuristic vision. In the third stage they have tried to move to a more revolutionary stance that seeks to build a new view in place of the negated one.

The third phase of Arden's development is, to a large extent, influenced by his and D'Arcy's visit to India. The experience faced them with the situation of the poverty of a Third World country that was alien to their European experience. Instead of being alienated by the situation, they were brought closer to it and were, conversely, alienated from the Western cultural and social values. Their positive response to this visit was their recognition of the vital necessity of radical change through direct political action. However, early in 1969, before his visit to India, Arden had denounced his own detached attitude in a comment on his autobiographical play, **The Bagman** subtitled "Portrait of the Artist as a Reprehensible Coward," by calling the detached attitude "reprehensible, cowardly, and not to be imitated."(25) He could also announce his commitment to one side of the problem :

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24. J. Arden, Preface to **The Bagman** (London : Methuen, 1969).

Mao Tsetung, that succinct poet, has said, 'Whaterver the enemy opposes, we must support : whatever the enemy supports, we must oppose !... I hope I have made it clear in **The Bagman**... that I recognize as the enemy the fed man, the clothed man, the sheltered man, whose food, clothes and house are obtained at the expense of the hunger, the nakedness and the exposure of so many millions of others : and who will allow anything to be **said,** in books or on the stage, so long as the food, clothes, and house house remain undiminished in his possession.(25)

The authors' visit to India had a drastic and historic effect on their social and political attitude, and made Arden announce soon after his return in a lecture at Bradford University, that whenever he wrote aynthing in the future, he would be asking himself how it would look through the eyes of an Indian revolutionary.(26) This growing political consciousness was directly accompanied by the authors' commitment to the Irish problem, and the product was **The Ballygombeen Bequest** in 1972, which relates the local situation of absentee landlordism to the more general issue of political independence and revolutionary change in Ireland. The second work is **The Non-Stop Connolly Show**

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25. J. Arden, **op. cit.**

26. Quoted by Albert Hunt, **op. cit.,** p. 153.

in 1977, a biography about the Irish socialist leader. Due to legalistic reasons connected with the libel suit of **The Ballygombeen Bequest** (mentioned by Arden in our interview with him, and included as an appendix to the book), we will not be able to approach the play. We will, therefore, concentrate on the analysis of the **Connolly Show** which is Arden and D'Arcy's latest and ostensibly most dramatically mature work. However, there are other reasons which have determined our choice of the **Connolly Show :** (1) the **Connolly Sshow** is the culmination of Arden and D'Arcy's joint authorship since 1960. Although Arden has been writing plays in collaboration with D'Arcy for a long time, during which her influence has been greatly observed on Arden's dramatic and political development, these plays can almost be regarded as a turning point in Arden's political drama. In these plays, Arden and D'Arcy's joint work takes on a new and decisive turn by placing the political issue of Ireland's independence at the centre of their theatrical career as two socially and politically committed, left-wing writers (although the same theme was tackled, though on a smaller scale, in **The Ballygombeen Bequest).** (2) The importance of the **Connolly Show** lies in the fact that, technically, it is considered by the authors as an attempt to modify the concept of the modern theatre. The dramatic structure of the plays and the conditions of the actual performance and the place of the performance (the first and only performance of the plays was at Liberty Hall, Dublin and ran for twenty-six hours non-stop), are a daring and courageous experiment that might

contribute towards a change in the concept and function of the theatre.

The Non-Stop Connolly Show, subtitled "A dramatic cycle of continuous struggle," is a biographical history of James Connolly, the Irish socialist leader. It is a cycle of six plays, each of which could be either performed separately or in one session, that deals with the history of James Connolly's struggle to liberate Ireland from British Imperialism and to build the Labour Movement in his country. In the Authors' Preface, the content of the plays is stated clearly :

> Throughout his career (Connolly's) one can trace the recurrent conflict between **revolution** and **reform** — an ideological dichotomy that still plagues all who have ever had anything to do with left-wing political affairs. In Connolly's case this prolonged debate took on so many shapes and faces that we felt it necessary to explore his experience at deliberately repetitive length — hence a cycle of plays rather than one clean-cut three — act summary.(27)

Hence, the pivotal idea of the plays round which all the other

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27. Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden, **The Non-Stop Connolly Show** (London : Pluto Plays, 1978), p. v.

issues revolve is formulated in the contradiction between reform and revolution. As far as these two concepts affect Connolly's life and struggle, the contradiction can be reformulated as that between being national and being international, since revolution is a universal concept. Being revolutionary signifies, in the main ,the surpassing of the existing reality with the object of changing that reality. Hence, the major issue raised by the plays is the extent to which Connolly was aware of this dialectical relation between being national and being revolutionary.

The essence of Connolly's dilemma is an inner conflict which centres round nationalism and socialism. Connolly, being a citizen of a developing country involved in national liberation movement, chooses socialism as a method of solving economic, political and social problems. But the dilemma here is that socialism, and especially scientific socialism, requires not only secularization (which Connolly rejects on nationalistic grounds), but demands secularism which is an outlook guided by human history and the scientific laws that govern the movement of history. Connolly's conflict is controlled by the dialectical relation between national liberation and socialism. and the dialectic sterms from the contradiction between the two concepts. In most stages of Connolly's conflict the nationalist fervour gains priority over the socialist cause due to the domination of the objective factor, namely, Irish national liberation and Irish culture. Connolly's last words before he is shot to death after the failure of the Easter Uprising, reaffirm his violation of the im-

portant socialist principle, namely, never to make a fetish of the national question :

> Out in the street the people throng and rush
> And cry aloud 'Bread, bread where is our food—
> This child destroys our life,' they cry.
> It would not have been done had there been any other way.
> They'll never understand why I am here. They all forget I am an Irishman...(28)

Connolly's last words "I am an Irishman," are enough proof that he was till the end unable to solve the contradiction between nationalism and socialism due to the prevalence of his nationalism. His alliance with the petty-bourgeois nationalist forces — which glorify national struggle at the expense of the class struggle, thus, making a fetish out of the national question — makes out of Connolly a national martyr. However, this also makes him an alienated hero because it alienates him from the root cause of all forms of alienation, namely, class struggle and, thus, he cannot realize de-alienation i.e. the elimination of the phenomenon of the exploitation of the working class by capitalism.

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28. M. D'Arcy and J. Arden, **op. cit.,** Part 3, p. 68.

In the authors' synopsis of the six cycles, the last sentence at the end of Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 reads as follows : "He determines to go elsewhre." This determination always follows an ideological conflict between Connolly and some political party member. The reason why this conflict is always turned into a dichotomous division, and ends in an insoluble contradiction, lies in Connolly's understanding of nationalism. His nationalism is absolute and, therefore, in his conflict with the others he lacks the dialectical element. This extreme absolutism is clearly contained in Connolly's statement. "That I myself in person stood forward to display / The full extremity of our doctrine — take or leave."(29) Hence, the dramatization of the conflict presents the postulation of the opposites by distorting the law of the unity and struggle of opposities. It omits one of two opposites (Nationalism / Socialism) and, thus, the other becomes absolute : once the absolute is nationalism, and at other times it is socialism.

The dramatization of this contradiction takes the form of Connolly's inner conflict between nationalism and socialism. On the one hand, he has to fight the forces of reformism within the Labour Movement, and on the other, he is engaged in the struggle against his major enemy Capitalism in its Imperialist stage. A colossal struggle with epic dimension which

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29. M. D'Arcy and J. Arden, **op. cit.,** Part 3, p. 68.

the authors attempted to present in an equally epic style. Hence, the first technical issue which confronted the authors was the characterization of Connolly. This issue was posed in the form of the contradiction between the historical Connolly who, according to many sources had become a legend and an important figure in the national Irish culture, and the authentic Connolly, the man of politics.

In a long essay entitled "A Socialist Hero on the Stage" the authors state clearly their idea of history and drama :

> ...the final decision to include this or that episode in the plays had in the end to be decided by intuition rather than reasoning. You can reason out a history thesis according to established data : but a play has to be constructed through the imaginative grasp of the human probabilities of each individual character.(30)

So, Arden admits that in his interpretation of Connolly's history he was guided by intuition as opposed to reason. His intention was to merge Connolly's public and private character in the dramatic treatment, or the factual, historically docu-

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30. M. D'Arcy and J. Arden, **To Present the Pretence, ed. cit.,** p. 93.

mented life of Connolly, and his (Arden's) "reconstructed emblem" of it. Yet, Connolly was a man of politics engaged in the class struggle, and his private life was greatly dominated and determined by that struggle. That is to say, Connolly's private life was subordinated to his public life as a man of politics. Hence, Connolly's impersonal conflict, insofar as it was the reflection of the class conflict, was his personal conflict from the beginning until the end of his life when he took up arms against the British Empire. To solve the problem of the contradiction between the public and the private issues in the dramatization of Connolly's character, i.e. to turn the personal dramatic conflict of the individual into the public conflict of the objective social forces, Arden and D'Arcy had to find a new formula for the traditional dramatic conflict which concentrates upon the personal inner emotions of the individual hero. Brecht had found the solution to this problem in what he termed as "historicizing" as an A-effect :

> Historicizing involves judging a particular social system from another social system's point of view. The standpoints in question result from the development of society. Note : Aristotelian dramaturgy takes no account (i.e. allows none to be taken) of the objective contradictions in any process. They have to be changed into subjective ones, located in the hero.(31)

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31. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **op. cit.**, p. 86.

According to Brecht, any judgement of any individual character's behaviour should take into account the objective conditions in which he moves and acts. By shifting the emphasis from the individual character to the objective contradictions, i.e. decentralizing it, the latter, in turn will bring out the inherent contradictions in the individual's character within the social system, the dramatization should bring out the negative as well as the positive aspects and discuss their causes as a consequence of the character's interaction with the social system.

In **The Non-Stop Connolly Show,** the presentation of Connolly's conflict is the implementation of the authors' original objective behind writing the plays, which they state in the same article :

> If 'the failure of a revolution is the springboard of the next success' and if the ideas of a man like Connolly still live, though he himself has been killed and his party fragmented, then on the stage it should be possible to 'resurrect' him for a few hours as a real living speaking acting human force, not just an 'imitation.'(32)

Hence, the authors were more inclined to concentrate on the

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32. D'Arcy and Arden, **op. cit.,** p. 104.

subjective rather than the objective elements in Connolly's life. In their attempt to give a positive image of Connolly, "whose martyrdom since 1902, had undergone a process of bourgeois, Catholic mystification, and whose ideas had been subjected to deliberate neglect,"(33) the authors were careful and insistent on focusing on the positive aspect of Connolly's character as a dramatic hero. By emphasizing the positive aspect as the only side worthy of being dramatized and not as an outcome of the negative factor, i.e. as the negation of negation, the dialectical and essentially critical relation between the audience and Connolly's character on one hand, and the actors and Connolly on the other, is lost. Both actors and audience are required to see and accept Connolly as only a positive hero. Hence, they are not asked to criticize his actions at any given stage. Although both actors and audiences are not asked to identify with Connolly's character, the manner of his representation would inevitably induce such identification because they are made to see Connolly within a particular frame i.e. as a positive hero. The natural consequence of identification is empathy, the direct antithesis of detachment which is necessary for any critical activity, and which is the basis of Brecht's alienation technique.

By concentrating on the positive aspect of Connolly's life

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33. D'Arcy and Arden, **op. cit.,** p. 100.

as a solution of the contradiction between the lengendary (distorted) Connolly and the authentic (historical) Connolly, the authors replace one legend by another. The new legend ignores the negative consequences of Connolly'sdecisions and actions, (hence does not dicuss the causes or criticize them), and concentrates only on the positive in isolation from the negative ones. By doing so, the plays make a fetish of Connolly's failure or his unachieved victory, and fix it in the consciousness of the audience. This does not wipe out the false consciousness created by and contained in the old national legend, but is rather a fixation of that consciousness. The inevitable consequence of fixing the false consciousness is fixation of alienation.

Although the **Connolly Show** takes into account the problem of alienation, the authors fail to recognize it as a factor in the movement of history. Hence, their view of history is limited within the present and is, therefore, not futuristic. They deal with the probable rather than with a futuristic history. The dramatists' view of history, which is reminiscent of that of Aristotle's, alienates history from drama. Their idea of the responsibility of the dramatist as being distinct from that of the historian, sets history and drama off as two separate fields. Their idea of historical drama being a "reconstructed emblem" of factual history, or "emblematic truth" as opposed to "essential truth," is the mere changing of dates, displacement of

events and quotations as being the essential difference between documentary history and drama. Although Brecht resorts to this method, it is not the essence of his historical drama. The integration of history and drama in Brecht's theatre results from the dialectical relation between both. The unifying element in this dialectical relation is the philosophical concept of alienation as a means of relating both fields. Hence, Brecht's historical plays are in essence philosophical drama.

Whereas Brecht's "historicizing" entails an alienated style of acting to enable the actor to detach himself from the character he presents in order to criticize it from his own (the actor's) standpoint, the delineation of Connolly's character is more conducive to a style of acting that implies identification: "Actors frequently felt that that is exactly what is happening: but the manner of production too often ensures that their subjective sensation is not fully communicated to the audience."(34) This robs the actors of the freedom to criticize the characters which can only happen with detachment. Identification also introduces the elements of illusion and empathy which are Aristotelian characteristics. The absence of the critical attitude is the inevitable result of such a relationship of identification. If there is any criticism at all, it is "stimulated with reference to the way empathy is generated, not with reference to the

34. Arden and D'Arcy, op. cit., p. 104.

incidents that the spectator sees reproduced on the stage."(35) Brecht goes on to describe the effect of empathy and illusion on the audience: "Admittedly there is a need for actions recalling real life, and they have to have a certain element of probability to create the illusions without which empathy cannot take place. But there is no need for the causality of the incidents to be brought out; it is enough that it should not give rise to scepticism."(36) Arden and D'Arcy are reproducing real-life incidents on the stage in such a way that brings about empathy rather than bringing out the causality of the incidents. This, in turn, makes the spectator unable to criticize or interpret the incidents nor can he relate them to these of his own reality. Instead of criticizing and interpreting present history against a futuristic vision, the audience only register facts about characters and incidents presented from the author's point of view, without being able to interpret them. This method informs rather than instructs in the Brechtian sense. The result is fixation of history in the time present, which is contained in the last two lines of Part 6 : "We were the first. We shall not be the last. / This was not history. It has not passed."(37) The authors' idea of the continuity of history, unlike that of Brecht's, does not lead to the future. The flow of history stops at time

35. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **ed. cit.,** p. 101.
36. **Ibid.,** p. 102.
37. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** Part 6, p. 106.

present and does not surpass it to time future due to the absence of the authors' futuristic vision. The effect on the audience produced by this attitude is not the wish to change reality but rather a sense of frustration towards reality, since there is no vision to guide that change.

The dramatists' undialectical treatment of history is reflected in the presentation of the fundamental conflict between reform and revolution that underlines the basic theme of the plays. This conflict is concretized in the characters. On one side, there is Connolly on his own as the dominant figure who incarnates the forces of revolution, confronting the forces of reform. Connolly is presented as a traditional protagonist who lacks a traditional antagonist and has, instead, a host of antagonists. His conflict with the forces of reform is dramatized by formulating the arguments of both through what the authors call "presenting both sides of the question with equal balance."(38) Thus, the conflict is reduced to mere confrontation of ideas rather than expressing the contradictions and struggle between opposites against the background of the struggle between social forces and political trends. Although the authors mention the world contradictions frequently as being the basis

38. J. Arden, **op. cit.**, p. 13.

of the conflict, it is of a formal nature. The nature of representing contradictions in dramatic form, the exposition of social and human contradictions, reflects the undialectical nature of the authors' understanding of contradictions. A comparison between Arden's opinion about the art of the flemish painter Breughel, which is contained in an essay entitled "Ancient Principles,"(39) and Brecht's ideas about the same artist in his essay "Alienation Effects in the Narrative Pictures of the Elder Breughel,"(40) clarifies Arden's conception of contradiction and sets it off from that of Brecht's. Brecht states clearly that contradiction is the basic element of Breughel's art. What he calls the balance of contrasts is achieved through the interaction of the tragic and the comic elements rather than the separation of one from the other. Whereas Arden's interpretation of the balance sees the two elements of tragedy (death) and comedy (life) as coexisting side by side as two distinct contrasts combined in one image each on its own. His idea of contrasts lacks any interaction between the elements. Brecht's perception of contradiction is dialectical, whereas Arden's is formal. Brecht, the dialectician, interprets contradiction in the light of the laws of dialectics according to which one opposite produces the other, and in which the unity and struggle of op-

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39. J. Arden and M. D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** pp. 9-16.
40. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **op. cit.,** pp. 157-159.

posites is maintained through the interaction between the opposites. Arden's formal reason reduces contradiction to two autonomous opposites which remain isolated from one another even if they are united in a relationship. The conflict resulting from this relationship lacks any dialectical interaction and the inevitablte result, thus, is that the solution of conflict is either tragic or comic, i.e. a fixation of opposites and the prevalence of one element over the other. Brecht's intention, however, is not merely to expose contradictions, but to eliminate them by pointing to the solution of the contradictions. The ability to eliminate the contradiction results from knowledge, or what he calls "better knowledge," which is contained in the contradiction. The solution of the contradiction, which results from the interaction between the opposites, is a new synthesis that contains both opposites but elevates them to a higher, qualitatively different, level of struggle. Arden's formulation of the opposites according to formal logic, which is based on the principle of non-contradiction, results only in an exposition of the opposites as fixed, insoluble antinomies.

To provide the adequate antagonist as a necessary requirement for dramatic conflict, the dramatists thought not to "show 'both sides of the question with an equal balance'... in dealing with Connolly's prime enemies, Capitalism and Imperialism.(41) Capitalism is represented by Grabitall, "who wears the same

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41. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 129.

mask throughout the cycle, but goes under several different names, according to his role in each part of the story."(42) In Parts Five and Six Grabitall becomes William Martin Murphy who 'is the only capitalist figure with whom Connolly comes into anything like direct confrontation, ..., and is therefore seen as a regular stage-antagonist."(43) In the first instance, where the authors choose to present both sides of the question with an equal balance, the class content is mystified. Whereas in the latter case, the conflict between Connolly and the capitalist figure Murphy, the class content emerges quite distinctly. The glossing over the class content in Connolly's conflict with the forces of reformism within the labour movement and outside it, is a deliberate evasion on the side of the authors in order to achieve their purpose of presenting Connolly as a positive hero. Connolly, by aligning himself with the bourgeois nationalist forces, moves to the camp of reform which, like nationalism, becomes disguised reform and is the negative aspect which the dramatists were anxious not to emphasize.

The result of presenting both sides of the question with an equal balance is confrontation of ideas without commitment to a particular idea. Commitment to a certain idea implies the solution of the problem. However, this necessitates a futuristic

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42. J. Arden and M. D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 103.
43. **Ibid.**

vision. For Brecht, the commitment of ideas was incorporated in his commitment to de-alienation of man as the solution of the problem of alienation to be realized in a future society which would be the incarnation of de-alienation. For Arden and D'Arcy, it is only a matter of exposing the various ideas without pointing to any solution, which is the result of commitment of ideas. The authors' idea about committed political drama is explained as follows:

> It is precisely this kind of 'elucidatory exposition' which we believe to be the main contribution of politico-historical theatre to contemporary public affairs. It is not so much 'propagandist' as exploratory and educational. But it is propagandist in that it finally brings the authors, and consequently the audience, to some 'partisan' conclusion. All conclusions about the state of contemporary affairs must inevitably be partisan — as we have stated consensus is not possible in a divided society — and the real issue here is 'can the point of view of the play be justified when the actions illustrating it are presented on the stage in public, and held up to the judgement of an audience ?"(44)

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44. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** p. 137.

The judgement which the authors are seeking and which they term as "partisan" in the sense of being committed to a particular ideology, does not result from the mere exposition of both sides of the question with an equal balance. It is the outcome of the interpretation of the attitudes and ideas of both sides and the contradictions implied in them. Such interpretation necessitates commitment to the ideas which one side stands for and represents. Any dramatist who wants to bring his audience to the point of ideological commitment, must be personally and intellectually committed to that ideology and must also manifest this commitment in his art.

The author's inability to commit themselves to a particular ideology, is dramatically reflected in Connolly's inner conflict between nationalism and socialism. It is not entirely wrong to assume that Connolly's inner conflict is the reflection of Arden's own conflict between a national dramatic tradition and international drama. His incessant search for a national culture has been the feature of his dramatic career. It recurs in his latest writings:

> The fact is, that although Ireland has had many playwrights and actors of the highest quality, there has never been an Irish tradition of **theatre** — in the sense of an all-embracing concept of art or craft which can include within it all the various dramatic activities: writing, performing, singing and dancing, designing decor et cetera, all woven together into one

coherent aesthetic... The inability of the Abbey management, even in its earliest days, to satisfy all its public at once with a genuine 'national' philosophy of art only reflected the enormous gulfs of ideology and socio-political purpose which still divide the Irish people... Now, given a society so divided as this one (the Irish society), how can it be expected that any philosophy of theatre can evolve to speak with one voice to the ears of even the 'dissident' community ?(45)

Arden gives adequate explanation of the conditions that prevented the evolution of an Irish national theatre : the clan nature of the Irish social system, British domination, unstable economic and political conditions, absence of religious reformation which marked the transition from religious to secular drama and led to the establishment of the permanent commercial theatre. Yet, he is unable to find a solution that would enable the Irish drama to be assimilated into national dramatic tradition, acclimatize itself to it and finally be incorporated in the corpus of international drama. The complexity of the conditions makes it impossible to find a solution within the field of drama, simply because the problem is not a dramatic but a socio-political one in the first place. Hence, any dramatic solution must have its

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45. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** pp. 114-121.

roots in a socio-political solution, which means commitment to ideology. But Arden's frustration at the absence of an Irish national culture does not lead him to commitment of such kind, but is rather justification for non-commitment to any ideology on the assumption that this attitude is the inevitable result of a divided society. The result of Arden's attitude of de-ideologization of drama, is alienated drama, cut off from society and politics.

Arden's technical originality and his incessant experimentation with forms, particularly his innovation of traditional popular English forms, determined his response to Brecht's theatre. Arden's concern with dramatic and theatrical language made him respond to Brecht's stage-craft, visual elements (as he admits in our interview with him). In other words, the regionality of Arden's technique allowed him a response to Brecht's theatre that is limited to technical devices disregarding the philosophical essence of the devices. It is necessary, therefore, to investigate the essence of Brecht's alienation technique in the light of Arden's own understanding of the nature of Brecht's theatre.

In his review of J. Willett's translation of **Brecht on Theatre,** in an essay entitled "Brecht and the British" (1964), Arden quotes a most significant passage which expresses Brecht's theory of alienation as content and form in a condensed manner :

> The old A-effects quite remove the object represented from the spectator's grasp, turning it into something that cannot be altered; the new are not odd in themselves, though the unscientific eye stamps anything strange as odd. The new alienations are only designed to free socially conditioned phenomena from the stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today.(46)

Arden's understanding of thc A-effects is :

> I take it as meaning that whatever is shown upon the stage, whether people, objects, or events, must be shown so precisely, so clearly, so transparently indeed, that it seems like a **new thing.** Only then will the audience be able to understanding its significance for their own lives — a moral, social, political significance which implies possibility of change, and which they ignore at their peril.(47)

Although Arden understands that Brecht's theatre is for change, he does not recognize the principle of effecting that change. Hence, Arden takes Brecht's technique in isolation from content,

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46. Brecht quoted by Arden, **op. cit.,** p. 39.
47. **Ibid.,** p. 39.

as he undertands it, using old techniques for a new content. But he deliberately disregards the fact that old techniques incorporated old contents, and that the commitment to a new content necessitates commitment to a new technique. Brecht's statement: "Altogether it is a matter of taking the old religious institution and secularizing it,"48) sums up the idea that Brecht's theatre is a radical change of the old theatre and its technique. Brecht's idea of change lies in technique (A-effects) and content in relation to a particular concept and ideology on which a new relationship between the audience and the theatre is founded. To establish this new relationship, Brecht had to revolutionize the old A-effects by rationalizing them with the overall intention of secularizing the theatre, i.e. replacing myth by reason.

It has been shown in our analysis of Arden's plays that his contribution to the establishment of a new relationship with the audience lies in his language; the simplified verse that resembles folk poetry and the moulding of traditional popular forms within a contemporary outlook.(49) There is also an almost general agreement among critics that Arden's contribution to the English drama lies in the language of his plays. In this sense, Arden's response to Brecht's impact manifests itself most clearly in the dramatic language of Arden's plays :

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48. Brecht, trans. J. Willett, **The Messingkauf Dialogues, ed. cit.,** p. 105.
49. This is admitted by Arden himself in our interview with him. See Appendix.

> ...Arden is a critically conscious post-Brechtian dramatist, a student of drama who has rediscovered for himself an "imaginary museum" of popular drama stretching from Aristophanes through... medieval Moralities, and Etizabethan / Jacobean drama, to the Victorian melodrama. Brecht himself was not so much a direct influence as a mediator, making it easier for Arden to go back to sources he was naturally drawn to : not just the epic and the popular theatre in general, but to the English ballad, folk or folksy song, irregular verse juxtaposed with prose dialogue, and period language for parables set in the past.50)

Katherine Worth asserts the regionality of Arden's drama : "His ideal audience must in a way always be a provincial one, with roots deep in the neighbourhood surrounding the theatre, it's with audience of that kind that he has had most steady success."(51) Arden's approach to drama and language is an expression of his sense of national identity which he finds in English popular cultural tradition. In "Telling a True Tale," he strongly defends that kind of tradition :

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50. Andrew Kennedy, **Six Dramatists in Search of a Language** (London : Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 214.
51. K. Worth, **op. cit.,** p. 133.

> What I am deeply concerned with is the problem of translating the concrete life of today into terms of poetry that shall at one time both illustrate that life and set it within the historical and legendary tradition of our culture. I am writing in English (British English) and primarily for an English (British English) audience. Therefore I am concerned to express my themes in terms of British (English British, but not exclusively) tradition. This is not chauvinism but a prudent limitation of scope. Art may be truly international, but there are dangers in being too wide open to unassimilated influence from north, south, east and west... Brecht was always alive to this, from the German point of view, he consistently worked upon the same principle.52)

Here Arden identifies his idea of regional drama, particularly, his use of English traditional froms, with Brecht's technique. But this is not entirely true because for Brecht, tradition is not regional, and the traditional forms among which he drew and used as raw material for his drama are not only German (Western), but mainly Chinese, Japanese and otherwise (Eastern). However, Arden's concern with translating the concrete life of today

52. John Arden, "Telling a True Tale," **Encore** (May-June 1960), pp. 125-126.

in terms of poetry, in order to present the modern world within the historical and legendary tradition, manifests itself in his idea about the distinction between the functions of verse and prose as two modes of language. He believes that verse uses "the associations over and beyond their surface significance; in prose, however, each word simply means what it says and nothing else."(53) He states again : "If verse is used in the dialogue, it must be nakedly verse as opposed to the surrounding prose, and must never be allowed to droop into casual flacidities. This is Brechtian technique, more or less."54) Arden's formalistic interpretation of language extricates content from form. His negation of the dialectical relation between content and form makes him fall short of using rational technique to convey his new content. His understanding of Brecht's separation of verse and prose is also undialectical. Although Brecht advocates separation of verse and prose as two modes of language, each when used in its own right possesses the elements of the other, that is, verse contains as much of the rational elements of prose as much as prose carries in it emotional elements of verse. The discrepancy between content and form in Arden's drama is marked by his use of language as an A-effect. Spoken language, whether verse or prose, and songs in Arden's plays have :

53. John Arden, "Verse in the Theatre," **New Theatre Magazine** (April 1961), p. 12.
54. Arden, "Telling a True Tale," **op. cit.,** p. 127.

> ...an element of spell-binding in Arden's primitivism. We do not find here an ironic or critical (Brechtian) use of ballad opera, we find, rather, the passionate invocation of a word-dance. The spell may work, but when it fades one is left with the awkard, partly extra-literary question: is this not a 'hot-house' language, which we experience like a festival of folklore in the suburb ?(55)

In the early plays of Arden, the transition from prose dialogue to verse or song, was integrated and unified in the dramatic context i.e. the story. In the **Connolly Plays** the separation of verse and prose is made, but within the limits of Arden's idea of poetry as being purely emotional and extra-literary, and prose as purely rational and one-dimensional.

Poetry and prose in Brecht's theatre are used as an A-effect, or what Brecht calls linguistic alienation (sprachliche Verfremdung). It is a rational language which borrows from science the principles of dialectics in order to bring about the state of rational understanding. The principle upon which Brecht's

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55. Andrew Kennedy, **op. cit.,** p. 220. Kennedy was writing about **Serjeant Musgrave's Dance,** an early play, which demonstrates Arden's concern with form rather than content. It is, however, a stage which Arden transcended later with the help of D'Arcy as Arden himself admits in **To Present the Pretence, ed. cit.,** p. 12.

language is structured is the exposition and elucidation of contradictions with the purpose of emphasizing contrasts. This linguistic alienation can take many different forms; by setting contrasts bluntly against each other, by the repetition of one situation or incident under different conditions. Almost all the structural elements el Brechtian technique (prologues, epilogues, in-between speeches, songs) are employed in the **Connolly Show.**

In Parts 1, 2, and 3, one can detect a few examples of linguistic alienation in the Brechtian sense. In Part 1, one of the Agents tries to bring order into the British army lines by telling the Bailiff: "You have the law you have the army, an impregnable combination."(56) Here, the placing of law and army brings out the sharp contrast between law and its enforcement by military power. Again in Part 1, Connolly's words : "trade unions, he said. Would that be socialism ?',(37) arouses scepticism about the genuine nature of the trade uninons' politics. In Part 3, before going to America, Connolly tells Lilie about the kind of life that is expecting him there : "Why, in New York, we could live like — I was going to say **kings but Americans** is good enough."(58) Here, the association between kings (monarchical system) and Americans ,capitalist system) seems unfamiliar but is logically acceptable.

We might conclude this part by commenting on the various

56. Arden and D'Arcy, **op. cit.,** Part 1, p. 19.
57. **Ibid.,** p. 14.
58. **Ibid.,** Part 3, p. 76.

stages of Arden's development in relation to Brecht's theatre. While the second stage of Arden's career marks a quantitative change observed in the shift of emphasis on the social content, the third phase can be seen as the beginning of a qualitative transition marked by a sustained commitment to political and social change. The outcome of this transition is yet to be realized in a synthesis i.e. a new concept and vision that give his drama a philosophical foundation. In order to be able to approach the spirit of Brecht's dialectical technique, Arden's drama has to shift from a merely juxtaposed exposition of conflicting ideas and attitudes with equal balance, where the objective factors represented by the social forces are overwhelming the individual, to a more dialectical representation of the subject-object relationship. Though in the third phase this dialectical treatment is attempted, though not fully achieved because the subjective element dominates sometimes the objective situation, Arden's growing conscious treatment of the dialectics between subject and object needs yet to be synthesized in a new formula that contains a new concept that grows out of the two contradictory concepts. Our analysis of Arden and D'Arcy's latest work has proved that they have not so far reached a stage which could qualify their latest phase as a qualitative transition.

The provinciality of Arden's language and his use of regional techniques, reflect his inability or rather his unwillingness to incorporate the spirit of the age in his dramatic art. Brecht's intention of secularizing the theatre and rationalizing the techni-

que, and the fact that he calls his theatre "the theatre of the scientific age," point to the fact that he wanted to evolve the consciousness of the spectator to the scientific spirit of the age and to create in him a new outlook through which he can interpret the world. This new outlook is scientific and rational. Hence, for Martin Esslin's statement that Arden is "the truest follower of Brecht,"(59) to be acceptable, Arden's dramatic language must incorporate the spirit of Brecht's theatre i.e. it must be revolutionary and rational in content and less provincial in technique, in order to have a more popular and universal appeal that fulfills the spirit of Brecht's theatre, which is the spirit of the twentieth century.

Arden's own use and manipulation of the Brechtian alienation technique are determined by his own understanding and interpretation of Brecht's theatre, in the light of which the extent of the technical impact of Brecht's epic style can be specified. Arden's views about Brecht's theatre, which are fully discussed in our interview with him, contain many contradictions and point to an ambivalent understanding of the essence of Brecht's theatre. However, they reveal quite clearly Arden's response to Brecht's theatre by the emphasis on technical issues and, hence, restrict the impact to a limited technical one.

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59. Martin Esslin, "Brecht and the English Theatre," **Tulane Drama** Review (Vol. II, no. 2, Winter 1966).

The first contradiction in Arden's views is manifest in his rejection of theory on the assumption that "good playwriting is largely instinctual,' 'and his generalized statement : "I don't think anybody ever does," includes Brecht as well. He then contradicts this view by admitting the fact that Brecht constantly revised his theory and that the development of his drama corresponded to and was the result of his developing philosophical and dramaturgical theories. Arden's admittance that Brecht revised his plays in the light of a theory, asserts the dialectical relation between drama and theory. Yet, Arden rejects theory and, thus, denies this relation. He, thus, falls in a contradiction with himself. The consistency of Brecht's drama and theory reveals his assimilation of the German philosophical tradition and a mind disposed to abstract thinking. Whereas Arden's contradiction and his inability to relate drama and theory show that he belongs to the tradition of English Empiricism, as he himself admits when he implies that the English dramatic temperament has an aversion to theory and is largely empirical. This is again confirmed in his refusal to answer the question on the necessity of adopting a method, on the assumption that that is one of the secrets of the profession that should not be revealed because the method is the outcome of the workshop, i.e. practising experimentation with dramatic techniques, which is not the same as Brecht's method that applies in concrete terms an ideological theory. This overt denial of the necessity of theory by a professed left-wing writer asserts our previously mentioned view about Arden's de-ideologization of drama. The trend of de-ideologiza-

tion is a common characteristic of New Left tendencies in British politics and theatre, which makes political drama regional and intuitive to a large extent. Arden thinks he developed from rebellion to revolution, and that this transition happened without commitment to theory. But his admittance of the total absence of theory denies this transition which can only happen in the light of a clear ideological theory (e.g. the historical background of the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution reveals that there were philosophers and thinkers whose theoretical writings paved the way for the revolution. This asserts that revolutionary thought precedes revolutionary theory). This means that Arden is still in the stage of rebellion, which is again a feature of New Left writers.

Arden's understanding of Brecht's theatre implied in his answer points to an important fact, namely, that the main feature of Brecht's theatre is its openness, that is, it can be developed through the new developments in society, and that Brecht's theatre accepts such development due to the nature of its openness. The susceptibility of Brecht's theatre to change and development is due to the social and revolutionary content of his drama. His use of the A-effects as a means to incite the audience to act and change society on grounds of the concrete truths revealed to them, is a model of an open dramaturgy because it is in accordance with the basic human need, namely, to change reality and to humanize nature. Brecht's theatre responds to this need which is the essence of man's being and is, therefore,

open and not closed. This is because Brecht's theatre relies on interpretation of reality and, as reality changes, man's interpretation of it will always be fresh and new. Hence, man can understand the changing nature of reality and discover that its changeability lies in his hands. Arden, however, understands interpretation as mere comprehension of facts and accepts it in this sense. This again points to the absence of ideology which should be the criterion for intepreting reality.

Another contradiction in Arden's views appears in his acceptance of the fact that British theatre is bourgeois and conservative, i.e. ideologically conservative, which contradicts with his rejection of ideology. In his acceptance of the class nature of the British theatre as an institution, Arden is not empirical. This is the influence of D'Arcy's views,(60) which shows that the subjective influence is one of the reasons for Arden's contradictory views and his somewhat confused understanding of ideology. This, in turn, is reflected in the plays in the dichotomous division between content and form, particularly in language: prose, which is loaded with ideological argumentation, and verse which expresses emotion and intuitive reason. Hence, in their drama, Arden and D'Arcy's distinct characters are revealed and the conflict remains unsolved. Arden understands ideology in

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60. These are expressed in the symposium of British playwrights arranged by **Theatre Quarterly magazine,** "Playwriting for the Seventies (Vol. VI, no. 24, Winter 1976-77).

the liberal sense i.e. as multi-regional and multi-cultural. Hence, for him all ideas should be expressed within the limits of confrontation of ideas and without commitment to any of them. This New Left attitude is the outproduct of Capitalism in its present stage, which manifests itself in multi-trends in economy, religion, politics and culture. The weak point of the New Left is its inclination towards de-systematization, ie. rejection of systems of any kind either closed or open. This corresponds to de-ideologization into which Arden developed and which is the natural outcome of confrontation of ideas in drama. This makes the class content of his drama vague because the diversity of multi-trends only expresses the conflict of ideas without solving it in the interest of one particular class.

Arden's regional view of drama is shared by D'Arcy, and is expressed in the kind of regional subjects they choose for their plays. Arden and D'Arcy's concern with the Irish problem is proof of the fact that they consider it to be the root cause of capitalism, while it is only a by-product of it. They deal with by-products or symptoms of the phenomenon of exploitation rather than with the root causes. They express the same view insistingly in the same symposium :

Darcy : That is the reason why there's no revolution in this country. The weakness of 'progressive' politics in this country is reflected in the poiltical theatre of this country — which is always on single issues. That is

> the way the capitalists stay in power. They let us all waste our energy pursuing single issues in isolation. Because as Marx and Engels said — and these groups claim to be Marxist — 'there can be no revolution in England until Ireland is off its back.'(61)

D'Arcy's idea of revolutionary political theatre limits it to subjects dealing with imperialism and revolution. She objects to social issues being dealt with in the political theatre because she believes that social issues belong to the category of educational and not political theatre. Social issues like housing, feminism, sex education, which are meant to raise people's consciousnes, are rejected by D'Arcy as not political : "They are not **politics** but a social way into consciousness."(62) D'Arcy's understanding of politics is apolitical because her reason is formal and not dialectical, that is, it relies on the principle of all or none i.e. either revolution (in the sense of fighting imperialism) or none. However, when Marx, whom she quotes, wrote **Capital,** which is a theoretical analysis of the capitalist society, he was paving the way for revolutionary consciousness. In the same way, writing about specific social problems is a political issue because it will raise people's consciousness and will evoke the revolutionary consciousness. With the advent of revolution, such social issues will be of primary political importance.

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61. M. D'Arcy, "Playwriting for the Seventies," **op. cit.**, p. 49.
62. **Ibid.**, p. 55.

A revolutionary theatre, such as that of Brecht, is in essence a transcendence of reality for the sake of changing that reality. To achieve radical change, an interpretation of reality is necessary. This change encompasses all spheres of society and can be achieved through social issues which could be interpreted with the object of transcending the present social conditions and effecting the radical change. The dialectical reason should see the factor of evoking revolutionary, political consciousness in the movement from the concrete to the abstract. In other words, to take concrete issues in society and to interpret them for the sake of achieving revolution. In this sense, revolution would grow out of social change. (E.g. the absence of social consciousness of the masses was a factor of Connolly's failure to achieve revolution.) But D'Arcy mentions imperialism as an abstract issue, whereas the concrete terms of imperialism are exploitation in all social spheres. These, in turn, lead to generalized abstraction. But to speak about abstract in isolation from concrete issues, is to disregard ideology according to which the social values and principles incorporated in the superstructure are interpreted with the object of reaching a solution for change. In this sense, the theatre should deal with the superstructure rather than the infra-structure, which can only be changed by revolution, in the sense of a party-organized potilical action. The theatre cannot change the present institutions, but has the power to change the prevalent values which serve the interests of the reactionary forces, by turning them into progressive ones to serve the revolutionary change.

One assumes that the revolutionary theatre moves within the cultural sphere. In this sense, the radical change which such theatre should achieve, is to treat social problems and to reveal the cultural heritage which prevents revolution, by relating it to the social forces that support that heritage.

Both Arden and D'Arcy reveal a sense of frustration and helplessness as to the possibility of social change through the theatre. There are many different reasons for this sense of frustration : absence of ideology, absence of an uninstitutionalized theatre in which they can present their plays, and absence of a largely working-class audience. The objective conditions accounting for the sense of frustration, manifest themselves in the strength of the established English theatre during the 1970s, as a social institution which tries to protect and preserve the status quo. This resulted in the weakness of the subjective factor which can only become strong at the expense of the disintegration of the objective factor. As a result of this weakness towards the institutionalized theatre. Arden and D'Arcy abandoned it to the Fringe. However ,this did not solve the frustration because, as it appears from the symposium, dramatists who write for the Fringe have their own problems. They all largely suffer from alienation due to the inadequate conditions in society and theatre. As a matter of fact, the Fringe as a social phenomenon, reflects the crisis of the British society at present.

Arden gives a lengthy account of his dissatisfaction with

the established theatre which has its roots in an early experience:

> I remember when **Armstrong's Last Goodnight** had been running for a few weeks in the repertory at Chichester, I revisited the show to see how it was getting along... It was a terrible disappointment... The play was no longer mine, it was not me but the National Theatre Company who was telling the story of the Scottish Bandit to the public each evening. I had already fulfilled my function, and I ought to have stayed away... A few years later (1972) Margaretta D'Arcy and myself had a dispute with the Royal Shakespeare Company about the production of a play of ours: we felt, as we made our case public, that we were speaking not only for ourselves but for playwrights in general, and, by extension, for actors in general whom we knew to be only too often as unhappy as we were with the bureaucracy of big subsidized managements. Some actors supported us, so did several writers, but there was a surprising degree of complete incomprehension, and an alarming attitude on the part of many younger 'fringe-theatre' people that the whole thing served me right for having become an 'established writer'...(63)

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63. John Arden, "Authors' Preface," **Play One: Sergeant Musgrave's Dance, The Workhouse Donkey, Armstrong's Last Goodnight** (London : Eyre Methuen, 1977), p. 7.

The authors' experience with the Royal Shakespeare Company at the time of the production of **The Island of the Mighty** was the dividing line between them and the established theatre, and a turning point in their theatrical careers. This is strongly expressed in the authors' joint essay "Playwrights on Picket" :

> The business of **interpretation** (i.e. **how** the meaning is presented on the stage) is the department of the director. The authors of **The Island of the Mighty** believed that only a complete analysis of both elements (carried out as composer and scene-designers) would serve to get the play back on the rails from which it seemed to have slipped so suddenly. But more than that : such an analysis would also establish which parts of the text were redundant in **meaning** and which were distorted because of **faulty interpretation.** Until this was done no accurate abridgement was possible... The writers realized there was now a fundamental incompatibility between his ideas (the director's) and theirs...(64)

The problem of "faulty interpretation" is the outcome of the dramatist-director relationship, which clarifies the confrontation of the subjective and the objective function in the dramatist's

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64. Arden and D'Arcy, **To Present the Pretence, ed. cit.,** p. 160.

career. Arden does not clarify the principle on which interpretation would be called faulty. The author's idea about the right of interpretation in the theatre limits it to the dramatist and excludes the director. Having robbed the director of the right of interpreting the text, they consider his job as mere presentation of the already interpreted reality. Whereas actually the director represents rather than presents (i.e. interprets) the finished text, and the theatrical performance is the interpretation of the director of the written text. In this case, the criterion of his interpretation should be to represent the text in a manner that helps the audience to interpret reality and change it. That, is, if the director's interpretation is one that leads to de-alienation of reality (i.e. changing it), his interpretation would not be faulty. Here, the faulty or rather the alienated interpretation, due to the power of interference of the director, should be seen within the limits of the contradiction between the author and reality rather than that between the author and the director. The director, being part of the socio-political perspectives of his country and a member of a class society, his alienated interpretation should be regarded as part of the alienated reality which forces upon the director the false consciousness. If his interpretation is a translation of the false consciousness of the status quo, it could be then regarded as alienated, and his faulty interpretation would be a sign of his false consciousness.

Brecht worked inside the institutionalized theatre, and, being a Marxist, had to face the contradiction between himself and

the capitalist corporation during his exile in the U.S.A., Finland and Denmark. In spite of this contradiction there was a unity between Brecht and such corporations. Brecht was aware all the time of the problem of alienation in all spheres of the capitalist society, and, hence, tried to combat that phenomenon within the field of the theatre. Brecht understood the dialectical relation between himself as a leftist dramatist and the capitalist corporations, and his plays were (and still are), therefore, accepted both in the East and the West. His policy of "cunning" manifests this dialectical relation and expresses his ability to manipulate and solve the contradiction and to force his art on the capitalist institutions. Arden, on the other hand, instead of solving the problem of interpretation — which is only a secondary contradiction and should be subordinated to the main contradiction, namely, that between the author and reality — chooses to abandon it altogether. Within a capitalist society, the theatre as a social institution, is commercialized and treated as a commodity for profit-making. Hence, the conflict between the dramatist and the theatrical institution is inevitable. But Arden and D'Arcy do not see the legitimacy of such a conflict and reject it on grounds of the principle of none or all, that is, either they work inside the established theatre on their own terms, or they abandon it.

Although the dramatist and possibly his audience are opposed to the institution, the profit which results from the production of the plays, removes the contradiction. Due to Brecht's

dialectical reason, he knew that the solution lies in the satisfaction of the profit-seeking managements and that that is the only means of maintaining a unity with those theatres in spite of the contradiction. Arden's formal reason, on the other hand, leads him to the stance of either the professional theatre accepts his ideas and submits to them entirely, or he isolates himself from it. As a result of Arden's non-commitment to a clear ideology, he is weak in front of the institutionalized theatre. Another reason for his weakness is his inability to find a substantial audience, which could form pressure groups inside the established theatre and, thus, impose the dramatist's art upon the insitutions.

Arden and D'Arcy's crisis which is exemplified in the lack of audience, is expressed in the symposium by Steve Gooch's idea of community drama.

> Over a period of years, you can build up a trust and a relationship with that audience, so that, although you are not in a specific community, you do have a position in a class community which is identifiable, and which in some sense brings you closer and gives you a more immediate relationship with your audience.(65)

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65. Steve Gooch, "Playwriting for the Seventies," **op. cit.,** p. 45.

Arden and D'Arcy are doubtful of the possibility of recruiting an audience without the accessibility of the subsidised theatres. This is asserted by Arden's insistence on the necessity of the dramatist's accessibility to the big subsidised theatres, overlooking the fact of their class nature. Gooch's idea about the touring socialist groups who work in different communities as an alternative for the big theatres and as a means for the possibility of the dramatist's alliance with an audience of a special class, is not fully accepted by either Arden or D'Arcy.

Arden's solution of the problem of the artist's alienation from his product and his audience, is that the playwright should produce his own work. Within that proposed task, Arden suggests that a distinction should be made between the two terms : playwright and playwriter :

> ...these two terms, although they sound rather alike, are etymologically quite distinct... A Play-writer is simply a person who puts pen to paper and sets down dramatic dialogue. But the Playwright pursues an ancient and complex craft analogous to the crafts of the Cartwright, the Millwright, the Shipwright, or — in old Scots — the Wright, pure and simple. The origin of the word is Old English **Wyrht** — a work, or **Wyrcan** — to work. The Playwright **works** drama just as the Millwright **works** mill-gear. And working or making a play includes what are now thought to

be the activities of the Director **as well as** those of the Script-writer.(66)

Although this idea sounds similar to Brecht's about the dramatist being a producer, Arden's formulation of the solution shows that he does not consider the alliance with an audience to be of central importance to his dramatic career. Instead, he concentrates on technical problems of production, and is mainly concerned that his finished product is presented on the stage without any change, irrespective of the audience to whom it is presented.

Arden's alienation from an audience and his concern with technical problems of production, implies a division between entertaiment and instruction as two separate functions of drama. The lack of confidence about which Arden speaks in our interview with him is the result of competing for audiences, which the strength of the established theatre makes very hard and almost impossible. Arden, therefore, concentrates on entertainment, which is the major feature of the bourgeois commercial theatre, to attract an audience. Another more important reason for Arden's lack of confidence is his inability to decide the nature of his audience. In an interview with W. Wagner, Arden states : "Man is a political animal, and the theatre, being a place of public assembly, is obviously part of his political life.

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66. J. Arden, **To Present the Pretence, ed. cit.,** p. 210.

Everything we do in some way seems to touch on one of the big problems."(67) However, within the statements "man is a political animal" and the theatre is "a place for public assembly," such words as "confidence" and "optimism" should have a political content, without which they become vague and non-scientific terms. Such terms can only acquire a scientific meaning by being related to the concept of man as being a political animal, that is, within a particular political content. But, using these terms void of any political ideology makes them vague and, hence, emotional rather than scientific. Arden's problem is that he does not wish to be intellectual and, at the same time, he wants his theatre not to be highly emotional. He states : "If the poet intends us to make judgement on his characters, this will be implied by the whole turn of the story, not by intellectualized comments as it proceeds."(68) However, being emotional is the inevitable consequence of Arden's refusal to be intellectual. This explains the fact that Arden's response to Brecht's influence has only been to the by-products of the technique rather than to the basic or essential features of Brecht's drama. This also manifests itself in Arden's concentration on the technical aspect of drama which he identifies with Brecht's technique, in the sense of stagecraft extricated from content. Arden's formalistic attitude towards drama makes him unconsciously in accordance with the

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67. Arden, "Who's for a Revolution ?," **op. cit.**, p. 50.
68. Arden, "Telling a True Tale," **op. cit.**, p. 129.

trend of technicism. This is due to his lack of a clear definite ideology and his non-commitment to a particular social class, which is a mark of rebellion. The inability to transcend rebellion to revolution is due to the predominance of the subjective factor which manifests itself in Arden's lack of audience. If one accepts the premise that art is the interpretation of reality from the artist's point of view, it follows then that the dialectical relation between the objective reality and the artist's subjective interpretation should reveal his class position. For Arden, the subjective factor, is stronger than the objective one, and this shows itself in his alienation from an audience and his insistence on technical issues.

One deduces from the previous analysis two issues : a predominance of the national culture, and an identity crisis. The first issue brings Arden closer to his predecessor Auden. K. Worth remarks :

> There is another connection with Arden, a Brechtian one. The way they both (Auden and Arden) use broadly comic, distancing techniques... owes something to Brecht, though they have both said that the influence wasn't of the first importance... And yet Auden and Arden seem much more like each other than either is like Brecht. They are both tremendously English in their theatrical feelings : they look back all the time to the old popular, primitive forms

> of English drama — mummers' plays pantomime, melodrama, where 'Brechtian' techniques were used in a very spontaneous, unselfconscious way.(69)

Arden's affinity with his contemporary Osborne, is marked by their concern with the problem of the identity crisis. The identity crisis which Osborne expresses in concrete form in **Luther** in the character of Luther, recurs in Arden's **Connolly Show** as concretized in Connolly's conflict between nationalism and revolution. This general theme can almost be regarded as a general feature of English drama. It has been previously proved that **The Life of Galileo,** being a characteristically Brechtian drama dealing with a historical figure in the field of science, is opposed to Luther as a distinctly Osbornian treatment of Luther and his personal crisis round which all the other issues revolve. Both plays reflect two different world views and dramatic treatments of historical characters and incidents, proceeding from two different outlooks. The one, **The Life of Galileo,** represents a materialistic interpretation of history in contradistinction to Osborne's psychonanalytic interpretation of history. Arden's treatment of the individual-society theme, on the other hand, presents the subjective as well as the objective implications of the issue. Connolly's search for a national identity stems from the objective conditions of society and is identified

69. K. Worth, **op. cit.,** pp. 108-109.

with them. In this sense the **Connolly Show** is considered a transition in Arden's dramatic evolution. However, Arden's treatment of history and the problem of the individual and society, are a subversion of Brecht's historical materialism due to Arden's intuitive and emotional interpretation of Connolly's character and actions, and the authors' insistence on presenting Connolly as mainly a positive hero.

The evolution of Osborne and Arden's dramatic careers marks a reversed transition from anger to detachment and vice versa. Michael Anderson discusses this point fully in his study of the theatre of Osborne and Arden. In the case of Osborne, Anderson observes a steadily growing aloofness from the direct social criticism that accompanied his early angry plays. Whereas Arden conversely shows an element of growing political commitment which he refused to admit into his earlier plays.(70) Arden developed from a detached pacifist to an emotional rebel (with the help of D'Arcy) who knows what he is fighting against but has only a vague idea of what he is fighting for. Having started off in the theatre with vague ideology, the development of Arden's dramatic career is marked by an involution to de-ideologization. This conclusion can be deduced from Arden's words to Walter Wager :

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80. Michael Anderson, **Anger and Detachment** (London : Pitman Publishing, 1976), p. 1.

> I don't think that it's possible **not** to be a political or sociological playwright. Living together in a society is a technical problem about which everybody should be concerned. Therefore, any play which deals with people in a society is a political play. I prefer, however, to concentrate on dramatizing the raw material of politics, and leave the technique to the political technicians. I am a floating voter : I voted for the Labour Party, and there was a shameful occasion on which I voted for the Conservatives, and once I voted for the Communists. At the moment, I am not voting at all.(71)

Arden't involution to de-ideologization is marked by his insistence on technical issues in Brecht's theatre and his adherence to the English national culture, which alienates him from the essence of Brecht's drama.

In our interview with Arden, he claims that what relates him and his contemporaries to Brecht, is the attempt to modify Brecht's vision and experience outside and inside the theatre ever since Brecht's death (1956). However, Arden fails to identify the essence of Brecht's vision which influenced his life and theatrical experiences and was, in turn, influenced by

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81. J. Arden, "Who's For a Revolution ?," **op. cit.,** p. 45.

them. Brecht's vision of the world is determined by the problem of alienation, which he intellectually understood as a philosophical concept and actually perceived and experienced as a characteristic phenomenon of the contemporary capitalist society. The specificity of Brecht's theatre and, hence, its originality, lies in the synthesis between philosophy and drama. The outcome of this synthesis is the theory of alienation as content and form. Brecht's synthesis of philosophy and drama is qualitatively different from the classical Aristotelian drama (which also represents a synthesis between drama and philosophy) because it is within a revolutionary, theoretical framework, i.e. scientific socialism. The revolutionary scientific content of Brecht's new synthesis is the essential feature of Brecht's contribution to drama. Brecht's theoretical writings are specific and distinct because they are the writings of a philosopher being a dramatist, i.e. a dramatist who is a practicising philosopher, and not a philosopher per se. Arden's response to Brecht's theatre shows the influence of the English culture which separates philosophy and drama as two distinct fields on grounds of division of labour and specialization. The result is Arden's inability to locate Brecht's synthesis or to trace his concept of alienation, which are fundamental to Brecht's theatre. Arden's writings about Brecht do not show his specificity and singularity and could apply to any Marxist dramatist. Having identified Brecht as a classic Marxist, Arden fails to see the originality and dynamism of Brecht's theatre, and claims impilicty that Brecht's theatre is dead and cannot be used in the English theatre for English audiences.

Hence, Arden's search for new techniques for English audiences that incorporate many of the technical discoveries of Brecht. This proves that the outcome of the impact of Brecht's theatre on Arden is not equal to the impact, that is, the essential feature of Brecht's drama which is the synthesis of drama and philosophy.

Although there are some traces of the theme of alienation in the Brectian sense in **Connolly Show,** it is not fully sustained and developed, but recurs here and there in some parts of the plays as unconscious, fragmentary and inconsistent flashes, and so is the use of the A-effects. This is because Arden does not see the original, creative Brecht but the classic who is turned into a closed system. Hence, according to our analysis and interpretation of the impact of Brecht's theatre on Arden, we can conclude that the nature and extent of Arden's contribution to Brechtian tradition represents a regression in that tradition within the contemporary English theatre. The result of this regression is the inability of post-war English playwrights (to whom Arden, D'Arcy and Osborne belong) to develop Brecht's theatre or to surpass it. This generation of playwrights throughout the sixties and seventies ,represents one regressive school within the Brechtian tradition, because their contact with Brecht's theatre did not produce a new transition in Brecht's tradition within the English theatre. We should add that this contact revealed an inherent unity among the English dramatists, in the sense that their reaction to Brecht's impact was a reaffirmation of their national

culture. Instead of integrating their national culture within a wider and more universal content, the English dramatists only asserted the regionality and specifity of that culture in their plays. Thus, they failed to assimilate the essential feature of Brecht's epic theatre, namely, the attempt to modernize the theatre, i.e. to make it incorporate the rational, scientific spirit of the twentieth century with the intention of liberating man from alienation. Hence. Auden and Isherwood, Osborne, and Arden's use of Brechtian technique may be considered as a limitation of the unlimited potentialities of Brecht's theatre, as represented by the content and technique of alienation.

CONCLUSION

Borrowing a Brechtian method of exposition, the following table may help in rounding up the findings reached through the analysis of Brecht's impact on the plays of Auden and Isherwood, Osborne, and Arden, which reveal the major differences and similarities between Brecht's theatre and that of the respective English dramatists. The two sets of characteristics should not be considered, however, as extremes or pure antitheses, since they involve a certain dialectical relation. The division is made only for the sake of convenience :

Brecht	Auden and Isherwood, Osborne, and Arden
Content :	
1. Marxist interpretation of alienation as man's separation from his products	Individualistic approach to alienation as the self-estrangement of the individual
2. Analysis of the conditions and causes of alienation as located in the capitalist system	Presentation of the by-products of capitalism
3. Unity of vision through the concept of alienation	Fragmentary vision through the presentation of symptoms of alienation
4. Class struggle	Individual, inner conflict (Auden and Isherwood, Osborne); social conflict between equally valid social forces (Arden)

5. Solution of alienation through alternative for change guided by a futuristic vision	Fixation of alienation, no alternative for change, alienation located in the individual human psyche and is insoluble
6. Masses	Individual
7. Concentrates on the critique of ideology	Concentrates on the characters' psychological reaction to situations
8. Revolution	Rebellion
Technique and method :	
1. Historical and dialectical materialism as the basis of Brecht's philosophical drama	Psychological socio-political issues (Auden and Isherwood) psychoanalytic interpretation of history (Osborne); idealistic materialism (Arden)
2. Epic technique through the use of alineation-effects and the exposition of dialectical contradictions in a dialectical structure	Loosely related scenes, revue sketches (Auden and Isherwood); music-hall numbers (Osborne); formal structure replacing dialectical contradictions by formal contradictions based on the principle of non - contradiction (Arden)
3. Scenes relate dialectically	Scenes co-exist and juxtaposed
4. Alienation-effects as a means to remove alienation through emotional detachment and rational, critical thinking	Alienation-effects result in a fixation of alienation through empathy and identification which prevent rational, critical thinking

5. Reason and emotion combined.	Emphasis on emotion and intuition separate from reason
6. Entertainment and instruction combined.	Emphasis on entertainment
7. Non-Aristotelian drama, rejects the idea of fate and catharsis and substitutes them by the idea that fate is man-made, and rational, critical thinking.	Aristotelian drama based on empathy and fate, though the latter is not used in the ancient sense, but presents the human and social relations as unrecognizable, unchangeable and inescapable, thus, preventing rational, critical thinking.

The above table shows that the technical aspects of Brecht's dramaturgy are the dominant elements in the plays of the respective English dramatists. Furthermore, the predominance of the English national culture and the de-ideologization trend expressed in the plays of those dramatists have proved to be major obstacles in the way of a genuine understanding and assimilation of the essence of Brecht's epic theatre and, hence, its development. In this sense, the paraphernalia of Brecht's alienation effects are used for ulterior purposes i.e. for non-Brechtian ends or for ends that are external or, at least, secondary to Brecht's theatre. That is, by using the alienation technique as a formalistic framework for their plays, the English dramatists reduce Brecht's dramaturgy (content and form) to an extrinsic and contingent element in their plays. In the metaphysical, psycho-religious revues of Auden and Isher-

wood, in the pessimistic, rebellious, anti-revolutionary plays of Osborne, and in Arden's pseudo-materialst, de-ideologized presentation of social conflict, Brechtian alienation technique is used within the wider context of British national traditional forms. Hence, by doing so the English playwrights disregard the essential feature of Brecht's theatre which derives from the central concept of alienation and appeal only to the inessential i.e. technical devices. The British dramatists' use of Brechtian alienation effects reverses the rule that governs Brecht's theatre, namely, that the content determines the form. This reversal results in a reversal of the dramatic effect of the technique. Instead of being a means of critical thinking and revolutionary praxis, as Brecht intended them to be, the alienation effects are reduced to a static, aethetic device to convey a stagnant, decaying social condition. In the case of Auden and Isherwood's plays, which were written as a spontaneous reaction to the turbulent social conditions of the thirties, the immature propagandist element prevails over the artistic integrity of the works. The authors' psycho-religious interpretation of social exploitation prevents them from offering any real social satire and, hence, prevents the audience's critical response. Osborne's plays, which reflect the changing socio-political conditions in Britain in the late fifties and early sixties, present the end of the British empire as being the end of the world by locating this condition in the protagonists' psychological states. This individualistic interpretation of society and history turns a specific and historically transient phase into an eternal, inescapable human condition and

fixes it in the spectator's consciousness Likewise, Osborne's use of alienation effects becomes equally static and uncritical. Arden's early palys, and to some extent his latest one, misinterpret the revolutionary dialectical structure of Brecht's epic theatre and reduce the social relations to pure formal ones. Arden's undialectical presentation of the conflict between characters and social forces limits the social struggle to a fair, liberal, de-ideologized conflict between two equally valid and acceptable forces. Hence, Arden's manipulation of the alienation effects and his use of Brechtian stagecraft, obliterate to a great extent the social content implied in the devices and do not carry out the social, critical content of Brecht's alienation technique. From the point of view of content, the social function of the plays of those dramatists is to reflect the socio-economic crisis of the capitalist society (Auden and Isherwood in the thirties), and to present the last phase of the disintegration of the class society (Osborne and Arden in the fifties, sixties and seventies), without offering any alternative for change. Consequently, the efforts of these dramatists to employ and manipulate Brechtian alienation technique have resulted in an absolute fixation of alienation and their plays are, thus, considered pseudo-Brechtian both in content and form. The effect of their use of the alienation technique is only to entertain and impress the audience but does not help them in critically understanding their state of alienation, nor of overcoming it, which can be only done by raising the audience's consciousness to the possibilities of change. However, to offer an alternative for change necessi-

tates a futuristic vision which those dramatitsts lack. Therefore, the contact of English dramatists throughout the thirties and sixties of this century with Brecht's theatre did not produce a new transition in the Brechtian tradition within the English theatre.

This negative result of the impact of Brecht's theatre on English drama, is the result of the prevalent Western trends of de-ideologization and technicism which, in turn, have alienated those dramatists from the essence of Brecht's theatre.

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APPENDIX

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH JOHN ARDEN (LONDON, JUNE 30, 1978) TIME : 3 HOURS

Alienation in Brecht's Theatre

Q: Perhaps we should start by directly discussing Brecht's theatre. I think that the true merit of Brecht's theatre and his real contribution to contemporary drama cannot be simply attributed to his Epic technique, as is usually thought, particularly in the West where Brecht is popular. I believe that the real, deep value of Brecht's contribution lies in the fact that his theatre presents the spirit of the twentieth century through one of the major problems of the time, namely that of alienation, which lies at the core of his plays and forms the pivotal concept round which all the other ideas revolve. And his epic technique of A-effects represents the aesthetic formulation of the problem of alienation as dealt with by Hegel and Marx, which he combined together, adding to them his own interpretation, into one term (Verfremdung) which includes the original philosophical and sociological meanings and assimilates them into a theatrical formula.

A: Well, as I understand it, what he is trying to do, in its simplest terms, is to prevent the traditional, or what have become the traditional relationship in the German theatre, and for that matter in the English theatre as well, between the audience and the actor in which the audience identify with the hero or heroine of the story, and because they have made that identification they are unable to place the events of the story outside a personal category. If, for example, you identify with the heroine of a play who has fallen in love with a man she can't have because he is married to somebody else, the whole mind of the audience would be as it were weeping with the woman as she weeps, and would be unable to look at what might in fact be the most interesting part of the story, which is the actual position of the woman, her depedence on somebody else's money perhaps to live at all, and would not be able to look for the causes which have brought this particular situation about. They accept the circumstance that she can't marry the man because he's already married, or perhaps because he belongs to a higher social category, that is obvious enough. But, there is no possibility of criticizing the social conditions that have made this, as it were, misunderstanding and, lack of cummunication between two human beings possible. So, Brecht presumably all the time ,if he takes a story, presents it in such a way that the audience are forced to ask themselves questions about what is happening in human society, in our relationships, all our relationships, economic

relationships, personal relationships, class relationships of course, what is happening to us that we have allowed our relationships to bring us into a position that we are unable to do this or that, or we are forced to do this and that. And, in theory, at that point, the audience having made its criticism, should then leave the theatre determined to apply the same critical observation to their everyday life. Having done that, they would then presumably be in a position to take some political action to remedy the defects of the society. But he's not exactly preaching to the public, as I understand it.

Q: No, his intention is to carry the incidents or the situation in a particular play, beyond the theatre, so as to establish that dynamic relation between the theatre and reality.

A: That's right. But the relationship in Brecht's theatre, and that's why he's such a good playwright rather than just a pamphleteer, is based on making the audience ask questions rather than telling them things in a tedious way. He's not that kind of dogmatic dramatist who comes in and delivers a lecture from the beginning to the end of the play. He poses a series of questions to the audience, and of course, leads the audience to finding the right answers to those questions. But the audience has to do a certain amount of work, it has to use its brain.

Q: Yes. So that the audience don't become, as they usually are in the traditional theatre, onlookers or recipients. They become rather interpreters of what is going on in the theatre.

A Yes, whether they do that or not is another matter. I'm not awfully sure that Brecht is entirely successful in this.

Q: You mean in England ?

A: Well, in the Western world generally. Because he leaves areas in his plays in which he depends on the intelligence of the audience to understand what he's talking about, he is also lending himself open to serious misinterpretation, like the misinterpretation of **Mother Courage** which is common in England and in America, I don't know about Germany, that treats her simply as a sort of a tragic heroine who loses all her chidren rather than, what I take it Brecht wanted, which is, that one should see the events of the play as the inevitable result of making use of the war in order to make a profit. You know the death of the children and so forth, is in fact part of Mother Courage's profit and loss, her balance sheet.

Q: But I think it was also misinterpreted from a different point of view, I mean from critics who sympathize with Brecht's point of view. They thought that he was, by his cunning, encouraging the system at the time, because he did not

believe in the idea of martyrdom and heroism and thought that a person has to be a coward at a particular historical moment.

A: Yes, but I think he changes his point of view on that several times, doesn't he ? I mean he condemns Galileo for not being heroic, and yet at the same time points out that Galileo couldn't probably be heroic under those circumstances. Which means that he's actually asking a lot of very difficult questions really, they're not easy, they're not simple questions. I don't think that Brecht is the sort of dramatist whose plays really end up with a simple answer that all the difficulties will be solved if you join the communist party and help build a revolutionary movement, it's not as easy as that.

The Classic Brecht and Young Brechtians

Q: The case being so, do you think that Brecht's theatre offers possibilities of surpassing him, taking Brecht beyond himself ? Because what's happening now is that Brecht is being turned into a classic, closed and rigid writer.

A: You see, that is possibly because of the place where the plays have been done. You see, most of his important plays were written when he was in exile in America, in the very heart of modern Capitalism. He wrote the plays for

audience that were still living under Capitalism. I'm not quite clear what audiences he was writing them for, because to begin with, of course, he was writing for German audiences in Germany before Hitler, then he went into exile and then he continued writing plays in German for Germans basically, but what Germans he thought would listen to his plays, I don't know. He couldn't forsee the future, he wasn't absolutely sure, he didn't know what the end of the war would be, what sort of government would be in Germany if Hitler is defeated. He might have, but what he certainly wasn't writing for was what happened, which is that East Germany becomes a Marxist communist government in power, and then invite him to become the head of their leading theatre. And so, the plays are then put on in a country which proclaims itself a socialist country and where the audiences, of course, can't be expected to be asking themselves questions about the situation of living under Capitalism. They're going to look at it from a different point of view, and under those circumstances, I think that what Becht did with his plays when he produced them in East Berlin, is not at all what they were written for, and inevitably the actual skill and technique of the productions became more important than the actualmeaning of the plays to a large extent. And so, it's inevitable that when he dies his work becomes a classic, the East German theatre would necessarily do that with it, I think.

Q: But, don't you think that any great writer, to be great, he has to be a classic, to become part of the tradition ? So, the problem is how to make him a classic and at the same time to make him dynamic and capable of being developed.

A: The trouble with Brecht, of course, is that he did go some way to making it easy for people to make him a classic because of his urge to thoroughly document all his productions, to make all sorts of photographs of them, have all these books prepared and rehearsal notes and things. So that if you present a Brecht play in the West you have to write to the East German agents that you wish to do it and they send you all these things, you know, this is how it was done. The reason why he did that is that he was terrified that they would be done wrongly and therefore badly, and his meaning would be quite unclear. But at the same time, he has made it very difficult for modern interpreters of Brecht, to look at him freshly.

Brecht and Arden

Q: What I'm interested in is how far English writers were influenced, directly or indirectly, by Brecht and particularly yourself, I remember that when we met for the first time, you told me that when you first saw Brecht's plays performed in England during the Berliner Ensemble season in London, you thought that this was exactly the thing you always wanted to do.

A: Yes, but my reaction... my responding to Brecht's stagecraft and technical methods of writing dialogues and scenes for their immediate theatrical effect to begin with, rather than for any deep philosophical meaning, which I only began to undertand later. I saw these plays, they were in German, I didn't know much about Brecht when I saw them, the actual subtleties of what he was trying to say were beyond me at that time.

Q: So, you woudn't say that you were influenced by Brecht ?

A: You see, I don't think that you can write plays according to somebody else's theory. I don't write plays according to a theory anyway at all. I'm not sure that Brecht did. I think that Brecht invented the theories as a result of writing the plays. In fact good playwriting is largely instinctual.

Q: You mean, you don't work even according to a method ?

A: Not really, no I don't. I criticize my work when it's halfway finished according to theories, but I don't think you can finally write plays according to a method, if you write plays according to a method, they would be very dead plays. I don't think anybody ever does.

Q: What about your idea of the "symmetrical rectilinear" and

"asymmetrical curvilinear," didn't you try to work it out into an elaborate method ?

A: No, not really.

Q: Why not ?

A: Because I don't think there's a method involved there. That particular distinction between curvilinear and rectilinear is actually a question of, not method, but temperament. In other words, if your temperament disinclines you to a rectilinear type of writing, then you will be in serious difficulties if you try and force yourself into it.

Q: And isn't that reflected in the structure of the plays ?

A: Yes, of course, but when you write a play, the play doesn't exist at all, you just have an idea which may not be well structured and the idea itself for the story produces in a sense its own structure.

Q: So you work it as it goes along ?

A: One works it as it goes along, and you can change structure halfway through very often. What is finally presented at the stage, if it's going to be any good, it has to have a structure, but it is a structure that is arrived at in the process of

work rather than by starting off with a finished idea and then, as it were, filling in the dialogues, which is no way to write a play, and I believe very few good dramatists do write like that. Some may do, there may be some people who are able to do it. I don't believe Brecht did it, I think his plays are much more instinctual and intuitive than that and that he probably, having completed a play, would then revise it under the influence of his theoretical ideas, but I feel that he probably found as he worked from one play to another, as he wrote one play after another, that in fact the theory was revising itself as he went along. If you go back to an early work, like **The Threepenny Opera,** is it written in strict accordance with the same theories as **Galileo ?**

Q: Not at all. But then these plays represent stages of Brecht's development.

A: Exactly, but when he was working on his later plays, like **Galileo,** his theory had developed for two reasons: firstly, because of the plays he was writing, and secondly, because of the actual outside experiences, his experiences outside the theatre, his observations of society and history and so forth, that was proceeding, and the outside circumstances have been proceeding ever since. There's a process of development, not only within the life of one dramatist, but over the lives of all the dramatists. I started writing plays for the

public stage about the year that Brecht died. So, clearly there's a process of development from Brecht's generation into my generation. And the theory is going to have to be constantly revised. You see, I have not only my own experience of the world to build on, I have also got Brecht's. But my experience modifies Brecht's to some extent because I have seen things happen he didn't know about because he was dead. And this is not a question of Brecht's theory becoming irrelevant or wrong. We're not proving Brecht's theory wrong, we're merely saying that Brecht's theory has not precisely taken into account everything that's happened since 1956 and particularly the things that have happened in the theatre since 1956. That a theatre that accepts Brecht is a quite different theatre than the theatre that Brecht is having to force his way into as a young writer.

Q: You had to face that problem when you first started writing, though the conditions were different. At that time there was that trend of protest generally referred to as the movement of anger or the angry-young-men movement, which was characterized by a protest against the status quo. The difference in the social and political conditions resulted in the different view of life, which was in a sense similar to the way Brecht started off in the theatre. He din't start off as a revolutionary he was merely a rebel, refusing certain aspects of society, but when he became maturer, he realized that the only solution was a radical change of society. How

do you see your own development, do you see it in the same way, a development from rebellion to revolution ?

A: Yes, to a large extent I do, but again it's not the same society as Brecht's, and I'm not sure that the same recipe in the theatre is going to be effective. ... I don't think that Brechtian technique in the British theatre at the moment is effective. I think we have to find a new technique for British audiences which will incorporate a good many of the discoveries of Brecht. But then I'm not really a theorist, Brecht enjoyed writing theory. Obviously he had the sort of mind whereby, while he was working in the theatre, his mind was all the time developin the theories, the philosophical theories as to exactly what that was. I must say mine doesn't really. The English dramatic temperament never has in fact, I think the only playwright we've had in England who actually was seriously concerned about a dramatic theory was Ben Jonson in the seventeenth century, though he doesn't always hold on to his theories all that closely in his plays either.

Theatre and Working-Class Audiences

Q: Do you agree that the theatre, in Britain is a very conservative art, and that the average theatre goer is the middle-class individual who is brought up according to a bourgeois way of thinking ?

A: Yes.

Q: And until now, the young generations of writers, the "new wave' 'and the "second wave" dramatists, have not been able to recruit a substantial audience from the working-class ?

A: No, because the working-class get all their drama from the cinema and from television. The actual practice of going to the theatre is not simply part of their pattern of life. It's not that they're not interested in drama, but they prefer it at home or in the cinema. The cinema killed the working-class theatres early in the century, because the kind of plays that were put on for the working-class were the kind of entertainments, the musicals and the melodrama theatre. The same thing is done better and more effectively through film and television, first film and then television.

Q: And this has eliminated the theatre from their life ?

A: It has eliminated the theatre because the theatre has the disadvantage, the dramatic theatre as opposed to the variety; the type of plays that the working class was used to go and see continuously and in very large numbers in the nineteenth century, were the spectacular melodramas with a great deal of action, violence, sentiment and excitement, and the cinema proved itself capable of presenting all this

through spectacle much more effectively. The type of play that was very popular in the nineteenth century was plays about exotic places, wars with Red Indians and Americans or African tribesmen, pirates, that sort of thing, and the cinema can do that much more effectively. And the same way with crime, gangsters, and detectives, they are much better if you can actually see them rushing round the streets in cars and all the rest of it, than banging in and out of small stage. So that the working-class taste for vigorous action and large scale spectacle is catered for better. And the same thing with musical variety. A big musical film is a much more satisfying spectacle than the ordinary kind of musical stage. Other aspects of working-class theatrical culture still exist, you still have the comedians, that type of thing, singers, pop groups who perform in all sorts of places. There is a large attendance of working-class social clubs where they have cabaret shows. But that is for singers and dancers and comedians primarily, it's a form of theatre. So that it is not really true to say that the working-class don't go to the theatre, what they don't go to is the serious theatre, and they never did in fact.

Arden and the Established Theatre

Q: Was your experience with the Royal Shakespeare Company a drastic one in the sense that it was a turning point in your career when you decided not to write for their company or for their audience ?

A: I didn't decide not to write. I really had made the decision before the experience actually. The play was an old play, (The Island of the Mighty), it wasn't a new play that they were putting on. It was a play that was kicking around for three years and which we had really sort of grown out of. By the time they decided to produce it, we were no longer quite sure that it was the kind of work that we wanted to continue writing.

Q: How did you feel about the criticism that was written at the time ? For example David Jones, the producer of the play said: "A disagreement which makes Arden feel he has got to cut himself off from theatres of our nature, is deeply damaging to his work as an artist."

A: I don't think that's true. I think that he knew perfectly well that I was already pissed off with this theatre. I'm not sure that it was deeply damaging to my work as an artist. That is something that he did not know at the time. The whole point of the disagreement was really that Margaretta and I had come to the conclusion that the damage was being done by working in the Royal Shakespeare Company, the damage was done by making a mistake trying to work there in the first place, we shouldn't have been doing that in 1972, not under those conditions.

Q: You had been working on community drama for some time ?

A: Yes, community drama, you see, I don't think that community drama is the only thing you can do either. I think that it ought to be possible for a dramatist to work in theatres like the National or like the Royal Shakespeare without having his work damaged or one's ability to work damaged, but it isn't because there's something wrong with those theatres. That's really the trouble, there's something wrong they're the public theatres, they are paid for by the tax payers, every dramatist ought to have the opportunity of working in them.

Q: Then, it's absolutely vital for a dramatist to have a place to produce his plays ?

A: Well of course it is, but I don't think that the sorts of places we're offered, the Royal Shakespeare Company, I don't think it's the right place.

Q: Don't you think that community drama is an alternative ?

A: It's an alternative, but it's a very unsatisfactory, staggering sort of alternative at the moment. I don't think the English theatre has got a proper place at the moment. I think there is something not quite right in the whole theatre. It is staggering about in many different directions, and I think this is due for reasons that cannot be overcome really by the work of the artist. I think it's something else. I think it's

due to the unsatisfactory social structure of the country, the political goings on in the country and that in fact England is a damaged country, seriously damaged.

Theatre, Society and Politics

Q: That brings us to a question that I had saved till the end, but it seems logical to ask it now : How do you think that the future conditions, social, economic, and political changes in this country, will affect the theatre ?

A: I don't know. I don't know how it will affect the theatre because what is happening is that this country is getting deeper and deeper into its own crisis, but it's the whole position of Britain in the world, having been an important imperial country, lost the empire, and is now tagging along rather helplessly in the wake of the two big blocks, the American West to which Britain belongs and Russia, plus the complications of China and the Third World, which is becoming more and more important every year. Now, as a result of that, the country by and large has lost its confidence, and this applies to the left-wing opposition quite as much as it does to the established government. They don't know what they're doing. The left-wing does not know what attitude to take about Ireland. Now, this should not be a problem, I mean the right of the Irish to indepedence from imperialism is really quite clear and should be accepted

without problems by anybody who call themselves on the left, but they can't make this decision because they have lost all confidence in themselves. They don't know what they're doing any more. I don't see how a theatre can be healthy in a country without confidence, a good theatre comes in a community which, for one reason or another, there is confidence.

Q: You've said once that the solution of the theatrical problem depends on the solution of the potilical problem.

A: Yes, that is a generalization. People would argue perhaps that there was a great deal of fear and lack of confidence in Shakespeare's time, and this is true, there were deep controversies and worries, but somehow the community and people had a sense of overcoming these problems that they felt the country was strong enough and able to go forward, and that the various difficulties and dangers that beset England at that time could be overcome, in fact they weren't quite because they had to have a civil war in 1640, thirty years after Shakespeare's death, but it was a period of confidence. The French theatre in the seventeenth century was a period of confidence. The Victorian theatre in England was a great theatre, not from the literary point of view, the playwrights were not much good, but is was great theatre for acting, and again you had a very confident and successful theatre.

Q: Where do you think that confidence is derived from ?

A: I don't know. It's rather difficult. It doesn't derive actually from economic and social justic, for the Victorian period was very lively in the theatre, but it was a period of great inequality. It was a period in which Britain was oppressing many other countries all over the world. But it was also a period in which people in politics who were opposed to the situation thought that they could win, the Socialist parties in the late nineteenth century were very vigorous, very determined, very optimistic.

Q: Do you want to say that they formed a strong social force and possessed a strength which is lacking now ?

A: The strength is lacking, it's the optimism actually, people are generally pessimistic in Britain.

Arden's Technique

Q: Do you think about your audience while you are writing your plays ?

A: While I'm writing the plays ? Margaretta does, I'm less inclined to, I'm more inclined to concentrate on the story itself and try to get it presented correctly according to its own terms really.

Q: In your opinion, what is your major technical achievement ?

A: Well, it's difficult to say. I could claim for myself, I think, the successful presentation of verse writing in plays which becomes acceptable and hardly noticed. When I first started out as a playwright, I'm talking about 1955 that sort of period, drama in verse was considered a high and mighty and rather superior intellectual, spiritual kind of thing. T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry, all those people, were writing. There was a school, and they were trying to elevate the drama by using verse, and all those plays that were written at that time in verse and which were presented in the West End theatres, were written for the London commercial theatre having started off in the Fringe. It was tied to some extent to the church, Eliot's plays are religious, Fry's are to some extent, a lot of the plays were actually written for performance in churches, and then they were put on in theatres. And they seemed as if the dramatist went into a different costume altogether for writing verse plays. I think that my work helped to establish the possibility that you could, in fact, use verse of a really quite crude and comparatively unsophisticated form without the audience being bothered by it. People used to go to the theatre to see a T.S. Eliot verse play in a particular frame of mind, you know, that they were going out for a serious evening... Ideally in the theatre, I think that you should be able to

understand the meaning of the speech approximately at any rate even if you don't understand a word of the language, if it is properly written, so that the author's written structure of the author's sentences in itself expresses as much, it can't express them completely, obviously it can't, but it can express a good deal of it. And if you see a play in a foreign language you can't understand all the complexities and the subtleties of the meaning, but you should be able to understand the whole general shape by the noise the actors make the movements you see them perform.

Q: Is that why the song is one of the major devices in your play ?

A: A song is only another method of communicating information, and music communicates a stronger emotion very often than ordinary speech, so that if you already are carrying out a totally artificial act anyway by having people talking on the stage in front of an audience, there's nothing natural about that, it's odd, it's unusual, so there's no reason why they shoudln't sing it as much as they speak it.

Q: As part of the pretence ?

A: As part of the pretence. You have a whole art form, the opera is all sung, most plays are all spoken, but there is no reason why one shouldn't take from the other, there is no

reason why you shouldn't have speaking in an opera, in some eighteenth century operas you do of course. For example, Brecht's **Mahagonny** is classed as an opera because there is more music in it than there is in the other plays. In fact it is a piece of Brechtian work which is to be judged on exactly the same grounds as the rest of his plays, except that the only difference is that in this particular one he has used a composer rather more than he has in the others, but the technique is not very different from the plays which are less musical, in fact it's exactly the same.

Q: The song, obviously, must have a different effect from the spoken words ?

A: Of course it does, but you have to know what that effect is going to be. It's an effect which has to be calculated in relationship to the whole script. There has to be a reason why that a person in a particular scene should suddenly sart singing, that without that song the meaning of the scene would not be so clear. And this is quite a part from the actual meaning of the words in the song.

Q: Do you mean the song has to be prepared for, so that when it comes the audience don't see it as odd ?

A: Ideally that should be so It's more than a question of them not seeing it as odd I think it should be a question

of once the song has been sung, the audience should see that it was inevitable, that there should be a song there as a result of the development of the action up to that point.

Q: That's true if you're working according to a traditional structure, a linear structure that develops from one point to another in which the song comes as an inevitable point of the developing action. But if your structure is of the kind that goes backwards ond forwards ?

A: Even with a structure that goes backwards and forwards, there are elements of it that it only works if it appears inevitable that it goes backwards and forwards. Any work of art, upon whatever principle it is constructed, if it is successful, the person viewing it is put into the frame of mind where they think that the creator of this couldn't have done anything else but that there, which, of course, is not true, there's always lots of things that could have been done. But if you got it right, then what you do looks as if it couldn't be replaced by anything else.

Q: In that respect, does the song come in as a commentary on a previous scene ?

A: I hink that the song can do all sorts of things. I can be a commentary, or it can be, as it were, a consummation of something that's been developing for some time in the story,

it can be outside the main action, it can be inside the main action.

Q: But, is it part of an overall or general technique which has a particular aim ?

A: The aim is to present the story, the overall aim of theatrical techniques is to present the story as effectively and as vigorously as possible so that the meaning of the story as a whole becomes impressed on the audiences' mind. And the song is part of the theatrical vocabulary. There are various things you can do on the stage. To start with people acting, you have a story to tell and the actors come in and act it. Now, in order to increase their effectiveness you do other things, you light it, you put costumes on the players of some sort, you put up some kind of scenery or you don't as you consider, then they speak loud or soft, fast or slow, coldly or with feeling, and that speech itself can be organized either in a close imitation of a daily life conversation or you can make it rhetorical, or you can put it into music, or you can have speaking and have music going on at the same time. There's a whole range of things, but you have all the different things that go on behind the stage there, all these people there, they are supposedly experts at it, if you're employing good ones, if they aren't you've got to make sure that they're trained, and they have these skills which they call according to the story. I don't think that the songs are

any different from any of the other ones. If you have actors that can sing, then it should be possible for you to use their singing voices as part of the total effect.

The Connolly Plays

Q: I have an idea and I want you to tell me whether you approve of it or not. You've gone through various stages of development, and the present stage that you're working in now is largely dominated by your interest in the Irish problem. The **Ballygombeen Bequest** and **The Non-stop Connolly Show** seem to me to express the theme of alienation in the sociological and political contexts, that is, in the Brechtian sense and use of the concept. And any study dealing with those plays, should see them, not as entities in themselves, but rather as a culmination of your various stages of development.

A: Yes, except that the **Ballygombeen** is a difficult one because it's been rewritten. We aren't allowed to publish it because of the law suit, did you know about that ?

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, that play is not supposed to exit at all.

Q: Is the law suit still going on ?

A: No, the law suit isn't still going on ,the law suit is settled, and one of the conditions of settlement is that we've undertaken not to publish the play or not to allow any one, as far as we can, to present or publish it.

Q: There's a point I want to raise now, it is about writing too long plays.

A: The **Connolly** plays?

Q: Yes. What is your idea behind writing long plays ? Is your idea behind writing such long plays, to put the audience through a theatrical experience for the longest time possible so that when they leave the theatre, the play would still have a lasting effect upon them ?

A: Yes, I suppose so. But the idea was really that Connolly was a man that devoted his whole life to the development of a revolutionary theory and a revolutionary cause and died for it at the end of his life. And we felt that a person like that is somebody who ought to be really honoured in the theatre by giving him a certain amount of space to express himself in.

Q: You mean you wouldn't do it in another play with another theme ?

A: Well, if the theme seems to demand it. We didn't decide to do it until we began by trying to write an ordinary two-and-half-hour play about Connolly and found that there were so many elements in his life that we just seemed unable to compress into that period of time without in some way distorting the image of the man and his work. We feel once it is all published, we actually want somebody to actually try and criticize those **Connolly Plays** and actually judge them as plays, which so far nobody has ever really tried to do.

Q: I still think that those plays are quite extraordinary. It's quite surprising to know that the show ran for twenty six hours.

A: We went to India, and there the Hindus, they do these plays like that.

Q: As a ritual ?

A: No, as plays, informative plays about their gods. We were staying in this village in the middle of India and we were just passing through it, in fact, we had to stay the night there in a government rest house where tourists can stop. There was a great excitement going on in the village and we found out that there was a play. There was a company of actors who were touring the district and they had

this play about the life of the god Rama, and it was a very conservative play, the mythological story which everybody knows from the sacred books and presented it in five or six episodes each one presented each evening. And again it is a long complicated story, the whole story of the god is told in a very long epic poem. And so they presented an episode of this each night for five nights and everybody in the village came every night to see it. It wasn't a ritual, it was a play in the most ordinary sense of the word. In the sense the whole play was a form of worship, and the producer of the play who had written the play himself, was, in fact, a priest. So that it all was very reverent and worshipful, and yet the actual action on the stage wasn't. It's a highly melodramatic story, he spent all his time fighting demons, he has a wife who is kidnapped by a demon and taken to Ceylon and he has to go and get her back. And there is all sorts of magic tricks employed and they were doing this on the stage with grotesque masks and lots of music and songs.

Q: How long did each episode last ?

A: About the length of an ordinary full-length play, two and a half hour. It was an evening's entertainment for the village.

Q: How can you bring that experience into a formal theatre ?

A: We related this, we saw this in India and then we related it. You see ,the old English plays lasted all day. Again they were religious plays, the Medieval plays put on in all the cities, not only in England, but in Western Europe generally, France, Spain, Germany, Italy. They took the whole of the Christian story from the creation of the world to the end of the world, through the story of the early Jewish prophets to the life and death of Jesus Christ, to resurrection of Christ from the dead and then into the future, the end of the world and God's judgement on the good and the wicked people in the world. And each town in Europe used to have its own plays. They were written by some local author or several authors in many cases. There were different companies of actors in the town, usually amateur actors from different trades, all the carpenters would get together and do one play, then they would each have a section of the long story to dramatise, and they would start in the early morning and go on presenting the plays all day, possibly over two days.

Q: How were these plays received by people ?

A: They went on for two hundred years doing these plays, so presumably they were acceptable, and the only reason why they stopped doing them was that we had the religious reformation and the break away from the Pope . In the Protestant countries, the plays were dropped because they carried

with them too much of the popish doctrine. In the countries that remained Catholic, the plays on the whole were dropped because the church began to regard them as rather crude and barbarous in the light of the developing understanding of theology. But a lot of them are ireverent, there is a lot of comedy in them, and the spirit of the age began to turn against them. They still do them in some parts of Spain I think. This is the beginning of our Western theatre, and it did not seem to us that there is any reason why we shouldn't adapt this, not to a sacred subject, but to a subject as important in a sense, which is the development of socialist struggle and organization in Ireland. To some extent, it is a modern equivalent of the same kind of feeling.

Q: Would it be correct to say that you are secularizing religious drama ?

A: Put it this way, using the technique of the old religious drama for a secular purpose. And that being so, the techniques that are required for the production of the plays are not those of the regular theatre, because the regular theatre did not exist when the medieval plays were presented. They had a different presentation altogether; they turned the environment into a theatre rather than have a theatre to put the plays in. The environment was usually out of doors, it didn't have to be, they could be done in a big hall or something. The commercial theatre came into England in

Shakespeare's time, the actual building for putting on the plays after the religious dramas had ceased to exist.

Q: So it has now to work the same way ?

A: We were trying an experiment, it was the development of our idea of community drama of writing plays. They were not written to be presented in an ordinary theatre, they were put on in a trade union hall in Dublin, and the whole approach to them, the whole way these shows was organized, was not that of the ordinary theatre. The audience came and went out when it wanted to, nobody had to sit through them all, everybody was given their ticket when they paid their money in the box office, which entitled them to come and go out at any time during the whole performance.

Q: So the fact that it wasn't performed in an ordinary theatre was part of the experiment ?

A: Very much so, yes.

Q: But you still feel you can't assess them yet ?

A: No, I can't assess it, it's difficult, but I do know you can't actually judge those plays by comparison with plays that have been written for the ordinary theatre. One has to judge them as an attempt to modify the whole concept of an ordinary theatre.

Q: My last question is, I actually want you to comment on two statements. The first one is by Herbert Blau and it says: "The theatre is the public art of crisis." You have mentioned something similar when you said that the dramatist's role becomes very crucial in times of distress. How far does your idea relate to that of Blau's statement ?

A: It depends on what sort of crisis. You see, if you enter into a tiny crisis and people are optimistic that, given the right strategy and the right solidarity, they are going to prevail over the danger that is threatening them, because that's what a crisis is, isn't it. It's when there is a confrontation coming, when you're in danger of something. Because the theatre itself deals in confrontation, without conflict there can be no play, a play is actors in conflict of some sort with each other on the stage, and that's what makes a play.

Q: If a playwright, who fails to present this conflict at a particular stage of social crisis, would you regard him as an irresponsible writer ?

A: It depends on what he does instead.

Q: If he just presents light plays of entertainment ?

A: I want to be rather careful about this, the presentation of light plays may in itself be a contribution to the solving of the crisis, you must remember. It depends on what they're being light about, in what way they're light, or to whom they are addressed. In other words, if you have a situation of deep social conflict in the country, there may be a need for plays which in fact serve to raise the people's morale by entertaining them on something quite different from their own preoccupations. And this in fact would be effective during crisis. During the war, which was really a very important crisis for the whole people, because we were in danger of being occupied by Germany, most of the theatre was very lively, much more than it had been for years. They were in fact getting all sorts of audiences all over England, who had ceased to go to the theatre in the 1930s, and what most of the actors and actresses were doing was presenting plays which had nothing at all to do with the war. They were not necessarily light, revivals of Shakespeare for example were extremely successful because Shakespeare himself is an inspirative and invigorating dramatist, and people wanted to go to the theatre to be invigorated at a time of crisis by something that was not specifically about the crisis. In other words, the theatre and the actual function of the playwright is not necessarily to write always on the major themes of the day. You can make a contribution by refusing to write on them, provired that you are aware as you do it that there is a major theme and that you have an attitude

towards it. But if we are talking about avoidance of the major theme of the day, is something else altogether, which is a kind of a cowardly running away from it and pretending it doesn't exist because he dare not take part in the critical situation that's involved. But really the dramatist whom I think is irresponsible is the kind who touches on the major issues of the day, but uses them for irresponsible purposes. An example would be a sensational play put on in England about the troubles in Ireland in which the IRA are seen simply as conventional villains, you know, you simply adopt the stance that the IRA are a load of pathological murderers, and so you have a hero and heroine trying to escape them, that's what I mean, that type.

Q: That would be the attitude of someone who is against the Irish cause.

A: Yes, but it would be a failure of the dramatist. In other words, if you're going to handle the Irish situation, you want to examine it, you may come down against the IRA politically, but you can't treat them just as ordinary stage villains, that's the point. I think the nature of the situation, in which people are actually getting killed in Ireland, makes it important for the dramatist who wishes to call himself responsible, that an attack on the IRA should be shown to the audience to be presented from an understanding of the IRA. Whether you oppose them or support them, they are

not just murderers. They are people who are killing for a cause, and so the cause has got to be presented in the play for the audience to make its own judgement, that's what I mean by responsible. It's not irresponsible to write a play attacking the IRA, it may be wrong but it's not irresponsible. In fact, it would be a right-wing author being responsible to his right-wing ideas, which is perfectly a legitimate thing to do, and there should be more of them in fact. I think if you have a country in which there is conflict and disharmony among different groups, they ought both to be using the theatre, if they can. We have very few right-wing dramatists right at the moment, I mean consciously right-wing.

Q: What do you mean by consciously ?

A: We have writers who slip into right-wing ideas without realizing they're doing it, that's not the same thing at all, that is irresponsible, to think you're writing about one thing and in fact you're writing another.

Q: Do you think that having the two opposing views existing side by side would erich the theatre ?

A: Well, if we're talking about a vigorous theatre, it would, yes. I mean the English theatre in Shakespeare's time became irresponsible when it became completely one-sided,

by the mid seventeenth century, before the civil war, the theatre had become totally the voice of reaction ,and the other side of the social conflict wasn't on the stage at all, and at that point the theatre became irresponsible and so it was really not very surprising that in the civil war they closed it down.

Q: Do you think that this condition is partly responsible for the fairly stagnant situation in the English theatre at the moment ?

A: Yes I do. I don't think the theatre at the moment is fulfilling its function. I regard myself as a leftist in the most general sense of the word, and I would feel much more envigoured in the theatre if one was working actually within the theatre itself, one had to compete with the right-wing ideas on the stage. You see, there was a right-wing behaviour on the stage, I mean the Royal Shakespeare Company in my opinion behaved in a very authoritarian, right-wing way in that controversy we had with them, but they never said so, they always said they were left-wing. If they'd come out openly and said we are the established theatre, we stand for conservative values and theatrical art, go away, we don't want you in our house, that is something from which a dramatist can discover a new vigour, but they didn't.

Q: You just said that you consider yourself a leftist writer, and you said previously that you don't believe in adopting any method or theories in writing. Don't you think that any leftist writer should be committed to some sort of theory which would guide his dramatic vision, and do you think that your plays lend themselves to a particular kind of analysis ?

A: I don't mind what sort of analysis is presented on the plays afterwards. The point is that you are asking me actually questions that I'm not prepared to answer.

Q: You never thought of, you mean ?

A: I never thought of, but I'm not going to answer them because they are the sequence of the workshop. You don't let people in our your actual technical difficulties. The work that is presented to them is the finished work. If people want to deduce a theory from it they can, some dramatists like to deduce their own theories like Brecht. But I don't think that I'm committing any disservice to the theatre by refusing to do so or evade doing so, because I don't think that the theoretical structure behind my work is such that it would be very helpful to other writers, who have to find their own theory. The plays themselves should contain their own analysis of society.

Q: Does the academic research written on your plays help you in any way ?

A: This is not much use, not to me. It might be, that people go and see the play, that's another question.

Q: But it never contributed anything to you, and you don't think it could ?

A: It's to this extent that it contributes ,it helps me, if I read a well written analysis of one of my plays, it will help me to see what I didn't do well in the play, and help me to see which parts of the play are successful. It is helpful in that respect, but it doesn't help me to write a new one directly.

Q: The second statement I'd like you to comment on is by Kenneth Tynan : "From the critic's point of view, the history of twentieth century drama is the history of collapsing vocabulary." How does it look from your point of view, from a dramatist's point of view ? Do you agree at all that there is a collapse of any sort in Western drama generally ?

A: Well, yes. I think the Western culture is in a state of collapsing vocabulary. But, do we include Brecht ? This is an interesting question, because Brecht's plays were presented in the socialist block, drama West Berlin has benefited from Brecht's work in East Germany, but at the same same time as we don't know what is being done in Russia

at the moment. Poland, where I have visited, their theatre seems to me to be more Western than Eastern. There is a pecutiar cultural shift, I think that the Western world generally, using the sense in the non-communist countries, there is a lot of ideological collapse in our art. I don't know enough about the work done in Eastern Europe to really comment on it at the moment, we haven't seen enough of it over here.

Q: If you make the distinction between Western and Eastern Europe, and limit that statement to Western theatre and culture ?

A: In that case, you have to exclude Brecht because he belongs to Eastern Europe, but on the other hand his plays have been widely done in Western Europe so that Western European work is not entirely all on its own, it does know about stuff from other parts of the world

Q: But then Brecht stands outside this culture because his plays represent a different ideology.

A: He stands outside, but if Brecht's plays are part of the repertoire of the Western theatre, they're also inside it. Because although he himself is not a Western dramatist, he was in the West when he wrote those plays, and the actors who are performing them belong to the West. So you can't really divorce him, there's a mingling there.

Q: Do you mean that Brecht's plays could be regarded as a reflection of the Western culture as long as he has become absorbed into that culture ?

A: It is difficult to know which culture Brecht belongs to. His plays, the later plays, were first performed in the Eastern block, they had been written in the Western block and were the product of a life which had been completely led in the West up till 1948, or whenever it was he went to East Berlin. And now the plays are translatea and they are done in Britain and so on, and they become part of the theatrical tradition of these countries.